



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 42 Winter 2017/18

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Want to take your bike on a new Hitachi train?

Then maybe you should think again! We have learnt that the 6 carriage trains will only take two bikes and the 12 carriage four. The 125s which they will replace take six bikes, with storage for a further six in the leading and trailing engines if you are travelling from terminus to terminus.

The publicity with which these new trains were introduced in October spoke of comfort and more space, and in the long term a shortening of the journey time between Paddington and Cardiff of 15 to 20 minutes. However with electrification needed to achieve these time savings and with most of this yet to be done it will be some time before this happens.

What's to be done? With only two or three of a fleet of 57 trains currently in service it should be possible to have more bike space provided in subsequent trains. An appropriate campaign is clearly needed.



The picture, taken on a German IC (Intercity) train, illustrates what is needed. .

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Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to David Naylor (davidjohnnaylor@sky.com) by mid Feb.

This issue

The article by our Chair on p. 2 and myself on p. 4 highlight current top issues: namely to get Walter Road more cycle friendly and to get the University's bike hire scheme off the ground.

On p. 4 you may care to respond to our Secretary's article. There is a lack of feedback from our members and space for it can generally be found in these columns.

The articles on p. 5 – 7 show that we are not just campaigners but do indeed *get on our bikes*.

David Naylor

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Cycling in the City Centre.

Wheelrights has been campaigning for improved cycling provision in Swansea for the last ten years or more. [Ed: actually since *wheelrights* were founded in 1995.] Many people already use the great foreshore cycle path to cycle or walk between the City centre and Mumbles or Gowerton. However there are many communities in Swansea that aren't so lucky, so the Council has decided to extend the network. Recently, the City Council passed a policy commitment to ensure that at least ten more districts or suburbs should have a safe cycling and walking route to the City Centre in the next five years.

Wheelrights is therefore seeking your opinion about better cycling provision for Walter Rd. which is the most heavily used road by cyclists in Swansea. Many people tell us that they feel unsafe cycling on main roads, while pedestrians rightly complain of cyclists using the pavements. The point to be made is that were there more facilities for cyclists this could be a win-win, not only for cyclists, but also pedestrians and motorists who can be delayed by cyclists going slowly uphill.



A month long public consultation is taking place in November to gauge users and residents feelings. So if you use Walter Road now or plan to in the future, then now is your chance to register your vote. Ballot boxes are located in four shops where you can pick up a voting form, namely Schmoos on Humphreys St., Uplands News on Gwydr Cres. Overland Cycles and Colliers photo shop on Uplands Crescent. Alternatively visit www.wheelrights.org.uk/campaigns.htm or the *Wheelrights* facebook page.

John Sayce

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Funding for Cycling

Courtesy of *Cycling UK's cycleclips* we learn that certain parts of the UK are getting money for cycle infrastructure, on a par with those parts of Europe known for their good provision for cyclists.

Thus Scotland's first minister Nicola Sturgeon recently announced that she will be doubling investment in walking and cycling from £40m to £80m in 2018/19. This is equivalent to £13.50 per head. This compares with England (outside London) where the figure is £6.50 per head. In Wales £3-5 per head is spent on Active Travel, whereas in Swansea (Source other than *cycleclips*.) the figure is a meagre 25p!

The first Metro Mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street, has announced plans to spend £10 per head annually on cycling over ten years. This is to be implemented under a strategy called "Movement for Growth". This, I understand, is the sort of money that the English *cycling towns*, of which Bristol is one, have at their disposal. London has more.

At the recent Labour Party Conference (in September) the shadow Transport Secretary, Andy McDonald MP pledged the Party to a budget of £10 per head for cycling and walking. Was anyone from Welsh Labour listening? Interestingly the West Midlands Metro Mayor, Andy Street, is a Conservative. Cycling has cross-party support.

David Naylor

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Baton Relay.

Early one morning on the 5th September a hardy group of cyclists accompanied the 2018 Commonwealth Games Baton Relay around Swansea Bay.

Wheelrights was delighted to be invited to cycle along with some famous sporting stars. One baton carrier was Alan Curtis (He is holding the baton, second left in the pic.), a true Swansea star footballer who started playing for Swansea City in 1972. He went on to play for Wales, and was recently a loan Player Manager for the Swans!

At 7.30am on that dark, wet and windy morning we were greeted in Mumbles by Gareth Govier (Sports Development Officer), with his enthusiastic Swansea Council events team, and the hardy group of cyclists set off behind the baton, waving our Welsh flags for the cameras. Alan was a lovely, friendly chap who stopped to chat to us and pose for the photo. We finished our ride with a welcome cup of hot chocolate at 360 café, while the rest of Swansea seemed to be waking up.



Nick Guy

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Bike hire scheme.

A bid to set up a bike hire scheme similar to *Boris Bikes* is underway. This is an initiative from Swansea University and although primarily for university students and staff it would also be available for the general public. Jayne Cornelius, the University's Sustainable Travel Officer, gave an excellent presentation about the scheme at *Wheelrights* AGM on 17 October.

Swansea University has reached the final stage of the *Santander Cycles University Challenge* in a bid to win the necessary funding. The University is now one of five, two of which will be selected for bike hire schemes. These will be the two who can raise the most through crowd funding. Visit www.crowdfunder.co.uk/bikes4swansea to pledge funding. You can further support the scheme by attending the curry evening at Ripples Café on 24 November. See p. 8.

If the scheme goes ahead there will be docking stations at various locations between the two Swansea university campuses. To use it you will have the option of paying an annual sub., which will provide some free usage, or pay-as-you-go.

David Naylor

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Is it time for rebranding?

At *Wheelrights* recent AGM there were pleas for us to step up our recruitment for new members, plus our chair raised the possibility of rebranding.

Over the years several members have asked if a name like the Swansea Bay Cycle Campaign, would be more accessible to new supporters who might google us or seek us out?

Advantages of such a new name include bringing us in line with most city cycle campaign groups like the London Cycle Campaign and Cardiff Cycle Campaign. If coupled with a rebranding this could help us reach out more effectively to new and younger cyclists.

Its interesting to note that both Sustrans and CTC have rebranded over recent years, with new logos etc. Following initial opposition both organisations seem to have settled down with their new brandings.

Wheelrights was a great name when it was a pioneering campaign for cyclists` rights in a hostile or uninterested context. However cycling is now moving towards acceptability, with many more motorists also taking up cycling at varying levels. Also when I tried googling *Wheelrights* I was mostly being directed to a pub called *Wheelwrights* (one near Bath Tunnels – possibly an idea for a future trip?)

So I wish to start a debate in *Wheelrights* and hope we can use the Newsletter to gauge opinions on this issue, which we could also discuss at future meetings in 2018.

Nick Guy

Mont Ventoux (Part 1.)

Any cyclist who follows the Tour De France will know of the legendary Mont Ventoux, with its wind speeds of up to 205mph, its desolate bare white top where nothing can grow, and the lower forest, where the 10.5% gradient is relentless.

Cycling up Mt Ventoux is something I have always aspired to do ever since I saw the "Le Tour" stars of the 60s: Greg LeMond, Tommy Simpson, then Pantani and recently Chris Frome; all battling with gravity and everyone else to get to the top. Tommy had sadly died from exhaustion on the climb back in 1967 and a shrine, placed where he died just 1.5 km from the top, is visited by most cyclists when they're up there.



My challenge then was to go there with just a double (not triple) chainwheel and complete the 25.5Km climb without putting my foot on the ground till I got to the top. So I thought I'd better do a bit of training.

The climb was to be done on my 69th birthday in Sept 2017, so from June I started training. This simply comprised my normal weekly CTC rides, but going up hills at a slow speed and adjusting my pace as if I were climbing them all day.

But this is not the same as actually climbing so I figured a more methodical approach was needed.

"Right" I thought, "I'll lead a CTC training ride over the Bwlch and Rhigos" (We'd done both many times before), but – and here's the sting in the tail – we would then turn around and do them both again in the opposite direction! Something I'd never done before. Cometh the day, cometh the men and a number of us surprised ourselves by actually doing it. This accomplished I felt very fit, but there were two things that bothered me:

- 1: The Bwlch and Rhigos gradients were nowhere near that of Ventoux, and
- 2: This training ride comprised four downhill sections, a luxury lacking at Ventoux.

To address item 2. I felt I needed to get myself some stamina. The annual CTC 100 miler ride fitted the bill and was tackled on the longest Sunday in June. I recommend this for everyone. It being the longest day you can enjoy it and get home before dark.

With these two invaluable training rides behind me, it just left item 1: to find a ride with a comparable gradient. So the week before we were due to leave we climbed the "Tumble" hill (Close to the National Mining Museum "Big Pit" at Blaenavon.) where the gradient, but not length, is equivalent to Mt Ventoux. Five intrepid souls puffed and panted and finally got to the top being rewarded with superb views before our lunch stop at Big Pit. But, although it had a similar gradient to Mt Ventoux, we would need to climb it four times to get the equivalent height. *[Ed: He fails to mention his double ascent of the even steeper Devils Staircase this summer. See the summer Newsletter, p.7.]*

"Shall we do it again this afternoon?" I questioned. "No" Was the unhesitant reply. So my training, such as it was, was complete. All that remained was to get there and do it.

Keep an eye out for the spring Newsletter to see our experiences and how we did. You might be inspired to do it yourself in 2018.... To be continued.

John Cardy

Coast to Coast



This year the loss of my brother to prostrate cancer prompted me to undertake a ride in his memory and also raise money for *Prostrate Cancer UK*. Following some research I decided to go for the original 135 mile Irish Sea to North Sea route. (The blue line on the map.) It would provide some outstanding scenery while presenting numerous challenging steep and lengthy climbs.

Being a NCN route I considered it should be fairly easy to follow with good signage and access. To prepare for the ride I obtained from Sustrans both their C2C Guide book and Route Map, both of which provided useful information on the route as well as providing route profiles and recommendations on places to stay. My chosen route has been done in one day but more often takes three to five. With the prospect of four major hills in twenty miles between Langwathby and Allenheads I decided to complete my ride in three days.

Day 1. Starting at Whitehaven in menacing weather I needed to travel some fifty miles through the Lake District via Keswick to the Wayfarers Hostel in Penrith. Views in the Lake District were superb but my progress was slow due to the numerous climbs and descents. I found claims that the NCN route was well signed to be unfounded and I lost time having to stop to check maps to find my way.

Day 2. After a sound sleep at the Hostel I set off on what I knew was likely to be the most challenging part of my ride: crossing the North Pennines to reach my overnight stop at Allenheads. The first section to Langwathby went well, despite an unintended diversion to Broughton Castle! The ride to Langwathby took me through the lovely Eden Vale. The second half of my day involved a challenging 28 miles over the most mountainous part of my route. The first and steepest of four climbs which peaked at over 1900 feet took me to the Hartside Café where treacle and toffee cake was a delight! Reaching my overnight stop at Allenheads involved three more climbs which took me over the highest point on the NCN at 608m. After a long hard day I was happy to reach my half way point there where I stayed at the Allenheads Inn. This lovely 18th Century inn is a must for cyclists.

Day 3. Allenheads to Sunderland. I made an early start on this my final leg having been told that despite most of the fifty miles to Sunderland being flat or downhill there were approx. ten miles of difficult terrain between Allenheads and the start of the traffic free section. I was glad I followed this advice as the first ten miles or so were extremely hilly; a challenge with full panniers and tired legs.

The final traffic free section to Sunderland was mostly flat making riding much easier. Large NCN sculptures such as that illustrated are to be found on this section of the NCN. I eventually arrived in Sunderland in time for my train.

Did I enjoy this challenge? **Yes!** Would I do another? **Yes!** But one less hilly such as the 174 mile *Hadrian's Cycleway* from Ravenglass to South Shields.

Mike Lewis



The Netherlands by bike and tent.

When deciding on a location for a relaxed cycle tour there are many factors to consider: somewhere with a dense café network, good routes, not too tricky terrain, cultural activities, many varieties of cheese. So we settled on two weeks camping in the Netherlands. Setting out on a cycle tour from the front door is always liberating. It was straight onto the train to London Paddington and then a cycle across the city to Liverpool Street station. We ended up on a segregated cycle superhighway after going through Hyde Park and St James' Park to Westminster. This fantastic cycle infrastructure made the journey a lot easier than when we made the same trip between these stations two years ago. At Liverpool Street the bikes are crammed onto a train with no cycle storage and it's straight to Harwich for the overnight ferry to the Hook of Holland.

The ferry arrives at 8 a.m. and the cyclists were let off first. (Well most were, the valve had burst on my inner-tube so I had to fit a new one amongst the car fumes). The first sign that you're in the Netherlands are the classic red cycle paths separated from the traffic. They are everywhere with the country boasting 35,000km of these routes. Navigating is easy too. The main junctions on the national network are numbered so all you have to do is join the dots and the local networks are also well sign-posted. We wiggled our way up the North Sea coast over five days stopping at cafés and a couple of cheese museums. The only hiccup was a misreading of the roads resulting in going the wrong way round a roundabout; my mistake was quickly pointed out by another road user! The weather was beautiful though and the towns a nice mix of modern on the outside but with a bustling core filled with canals, alleyways and history, dating from the 1200's.

After five days our luck with the weather ran out, for the next two days it turning a bit more like what we're used to in Wales. We took a tarp to accompany the two person tent; this was very welcome in the pouring rain meaning that the wet luggage could remain outside. We were soaked through by the time we'd reached the campsite on the island of Texel so decided to stay for a few days to dry out. Mostly we opted for farm camping which allows you to meet some lovely people.



After our holiday-within-a-holiday on Texel we caught a ferry back to the mainland and then a train south to east of Utrecht. Here we encountered a hill which caused much discussion all day as it was my only gear change of the trip! This area is more built up but still has lovely historical towns and cycle paths next to fields and canals. Over the next few days, we mostly followed the river to Rotterdam, staying in the famous cube hostel for the last night. The final push to the ferry was against the wind and rain all day and we arrived back at the ferry completely soaked.

Max Stokes

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Forthcoming events

(See also the 'Events' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk.)

Green Fayre

10.00am – 4.00pm on Saturday and Sunday, 18/19 November. *Wheelrights* have a stall.

Wheelrights Christmas Dinner

7.00 for 7.30pm, on Thursday, 7 December, in the *Mumbai* on Mill Lane in Blackpill. If you plan to attend please email Dawn Aplin: dawnaplin@hotmail.com.

Film and curry evening.

7.00pm on Friday, 24 November, in *Ripples* Café, 93 Mumbles Road, where a film will be shown. The £10 entrance charge will go to support the bike hire scheme (See p.4.) Details and how to book are on the 'Events' page.

Wheelrights Routes group meeting/rides

10.00am Saturday 2 December, Civic Centre Café, SA1 3SN by south entrance. All interested welcome. Thereafter first Saturday in the month (but check the 'Events' page).

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Out of the mouths of wisdom.

Grandad was out on his bicycle. My brother and family were visiting for Christmas or New Year, I forget which – it was some years ago. My nephew must have been three or four at the time. He had noticed Grandad's other bike in its usual place and asked:

"Why has Grandad two bikes?"

"One for going and the other for coming back."

said Nana who was busy with something else. A moment's reflection, then:

"But how will he come back?"

and pointing to the remaining bike:

"We'll have to take it to him!"



Penny Naylor

Merry Christmas!