



# Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 6 Winter 2008/9

www.wheelrights.org.uk



David Judd tells us about Bob and others add some anecdotes.



## Bob Burn's bench dedicated and path opened

This happened on 4th October. There was a ride from Blackpill to the site of the bench on the North Gower path near the *Sea Gardens* restaurant. Others joined us there. There were about two dozen of us as the photo shows, despite the rain! We then retired to the *Welcome to Gower* in Gowerton.

At around this time the new bridge at the west end of the new section of path was completed, thus providing 1½ miles of traffic free path westward to Penclawdd

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## Editorial

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### Copy deadline

Copy for the next issue should be sent to *Wheelrights* Secretary (e-mail address below) by end of February 2009.

I think it important that a significant proportion of these Newsletters is made up of material provided by our membership or their contacts. This time we have been particularly fortunate in being able to include (on p. 5) an article by nine year old Ann Lintern about her fantastic cycle ride across the United States with her mother and Grandad.

In addition to that we have news about our campaigning efforts in the City Centre, an account of a couple of our *Explorer* Rides, an article from Claudine, some odds and ends and, putting the first last, a challenge from Chairman Nick.

Issues 2 and 3 had a letters column. This we would gladly revive, but we need correspondence. So if you wish to response to the articles herein or if there is something you would like to get off your chest please send it to me.

David Naylor

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## Your views are needed

At last cycling in Swansea appears to be increasing significantly. This may be due to the recent high cost of petrol, the credit crunch, health and environmental concerns or a combination of these factors.

This increase presents Swansea & Neath Port Talbot Councils and *Wheelrights* with a number of challenges, most of which relate to making cycling *safer* and *more convenient*.

### Council's Cycling Review

This wide ranging review gives us all the opportunity to help change the culture and mindset of our traffic planners away from cars to embrace the needs of cyclists and walkers more.

*Wheelrights* is to be actively involved with the review and wish to represent your views to Swansea Council. So please e-mail or write to David Naylor (address on front page) with your views and suggestions. A selection will be published in the next Newsletter.

We are pressing for an *Action Plan* to come out of this review which will hopefully generate funding for better cycle provision in the Swansea area.

There is a questionnaire which if you haven't done so already we urge you to complete. It can be completed or downloaded from [www.swansea.gov.uk](http://www.swansea.gov.uk). Enter "Cycling" in the box, top left.

### A network of cycle routes

Most cities now have a network of signed on-road cycle routes on quiet roads, so why not Swansea? *Wheelrights* is currently in discussion with Swansea Council regarding production of a Swansea Cycling Map.

We need your ideas for cycle friendly local roads/commuter routes, which could be highlighted on the map. A good example is the Penlan Crescent – Mount Pleasant route linking Sketty to Mount Pleasant. This passes two Junior Schools and two parks, and is blocked to through motor traffic.

These routes should be desire lines which cyclists already use or new links to existing routes. Once the routes become recognised there would be pressure to install direction signs, traffic calming and in some areas (residential streets and near schools) 20mph limits.

As the article on the *City Centre Ride* (p. 3) shows we are reaching more Councillors now.

There is a window of opportunity and we urgently need your suggestions to get our message across. So please let us have your e-mails and letters to pass on to the relevant Council.

Nick Guy (Chairman)

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## Blackpill Crossing

The unsatisfactory situation whereby cyclists and pedestrians have to wait around 45 seconds before the *Toucan* crossing lights change in their favour was well aired at the *Cycle Forum* on 8<sup>th</sup> October. We pointed out that were the lights to change more quickly – say after 15 seconds – and remain green for the same length of time as at present, motorists would be held up no more than now; it would simply mean that the delay period would be put forward half a minute. A proviso would be that there would be a longer wait time – perhaps a minute – following the cyclist/pedestrian phase before it returned to 15 seconds.

This was given a sympathetic hearing. We were told that the lights were of a type not amenable to adjustment. In fact they were due for replacement some years ago but this was not done because it appears the Council lacks the money. However, the CCS officer responsible promised to see if the lights could be tweaked to ease the situation. (As this goes to press no improvement is apparent.)

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## City Centre ride on 22 September



**Left to right:** Cllr Mark Child, Helen Davies, Cllr Alan Robinson, Nick Guy, Cllr Rob Speht, Cllr John Hague, Cllr Paul Meara, David Naylor, Reena Owen, Veronica Wood, Rhian Evans, Geoff Wood, Ben George

This ride was organised by *Wheelrights*. It started and finished at the Civic Centre encompassing much of the City Centre between there and the Railway Station. CCS's Director of Environment, Reena Owen and four Councillors were amongst those who came on the ride. The photo shows them. The Cycling Officer, Rob Wachowski, is missing as he took the photo. Its purpose was to note the recent provision for cyclists in the City Centre and draw attention to what needs to be done.

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## Landore cycle route

The new bus route between the Railway Station and the Landore Park-and-Ride has a cycle route running beside part of it. The photo is looking north and shows the start of the cycle path. It is about 500m long and ends on Maliphant Street. This is a useful direct route between the Station and the Hafod as it avoids the awkward (for cyclists) New Cut/Neath Road junction.

At Maliphant Street one turns left to join the Neath Road in Hafod at the traffic lights. Turning right one goes underneath both the new bus road and the railway to join the north end of Morfa Road. One day there might be a link from here along the west side of the Tawe to the Liberty Stadium where it would connect with NCN 43 and points north. Let's hope that this day is not too far away!



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## The Problem With Cycling...

... is that it's mostly practised by *cyclists*. I am of course a cyclist myself, and some of my favourite people are also cyclists, but nevertheless it's easy to see how cyclists can put people off the very idea of cycling. They wear funny lycra clothes that normal people wouldn't be caught dead in, always look annoyingly invigorated when they arrive at work, and spend about a quarter of the family income on small shiny metal things of mysterious purpose. I am guilty of all the above, and every non-cyclist I know treats me (at least some of the time) as though I belong to a different species. We spend a lot of time feeling a bit hurt by this reaction, and campaigning vigorously to be accepted and to have our rights recognised. This is a good thing, but alongside it I think we need a parallel campaign to *Be A Bit More Normal*, especially around non-cyclists.

The purpose of the Be a Bit More Normal campaign is to convince people that they can enjoy most of the benefits of cycling without actually having to become a cyclist. So, I propose a few rules of thumb for established cyclists:

If you are cycling to the pub half a mile away, wear normal clothes. I know that they are not really ideal for cycling, and you will be missing your lycra bibshorts and as soon as you get in the saddle, but it *is* only half a mile. Tucking your trouser leg into your sock is allowed, but untuck it before you enter the bar.

Resist the temptation to enlighten newcomers with your detailed views on The Great Helmet Debate or The Uses of Primary Road Position. If the mere thought of being seen in a helmet deters them from cycling, indulge them in this small vanity; and if they feel more confident wearing a helmet, don't try and make them take it off while barking statistics about rotational head injuries.

When a new cyclist is buying their first bike, let them choose the one they want. Be on hand to offer broad advice about fitting, basic quality and suitability for purpose, but do not start banging on about the bottom bracket not being quite up to the spec of the other components, or outlining your thoughts on the aesthetics of straight v. riser handlebars. Remember that you can have a lot of fun and go to lots of places on a slightly unsuitable bike that you love, but one that you don't like will never get used for anything.

At the risk of sounding like an advertising slogan, let beginners be whatever kind of cyclist they want to be. Any cycling is better than no cycling. Do not insist on them cycling in the rain, up big hills, or on busy roads. Don't try to make them go faster, get muddier, or jump off higher things. They will either end up setting these goals for themselves and asking to join in, or happily continue as fair-weather-flat-pavement cyclists. If it's the latter, get over it.

Of course, we secretly know that for most people, the cycling bug will bite. They will, in time, start to wax lyrical about Hope headsets or Campagnolo drivetrains, spend their lunch hour comparing the merits of different overshoes on the internet, and become strangely exasperated when they see someone pedalling along with their saddle set too low. But we don't have to tell them that just yet...

Claudine Conway

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## USA Coast-to-Coast Cycle Trip

(Cape Canaveral, Florida to San Diego, California: 2,641 miles)



After my Grandad, Mum and I (aged 7 at the time) had cycled from northern to southern France (Le Havre to Montpellier) in 2006, my Grandad came up with the idea of cycling across America.

I thought I would see cowboys in Texas, sand dunes in Arizona and palm trees in California, but I saw a lot more than this! I experienced very bad thunder storms in Florida, Alabama and Mississippi, bad roads in Louisiana, very hot temperatures (45°C) in the Sonoran Desert in Arizona and California, mountains (8,650 ft) in New Mexico and really steep hills going into San Diego (California). While we were in the U.S.A there were also 2 hurricanes and 1 tropical storm, which would have hit us if we had been cycling any slower.

It took 60 days to cycle 2,641 miles from Cape Canaveral (Florida) to San Diego (California), but we didn't cycle on mountain bikes. My mum and I did it on a recumbent (laid-back) tandem, and my Grandad on a recumbent. The reason why we travelled on recumbents was for comfort as you can get saddle sore travelling long distance on mountain bikes.

We cycled between 40 to 50 miles a day for 60 days. Along the way we stayed in motels, campgrounds and slept out in our tent. We found the best place to camp in the wilderness was in the tunnels under the roads as no one could see you and you would stay dry if it rained. Sometimes there were swallows' nests in the tunnels.

The part of the trip which I enjoyed the most was looking at the landscape, wildlife (butterflies, armadillo, birds, deer and horses), going into the pool at the motels, and having ice-cream and ice-cold drinks. The two states I liked the most were California because it was cool and New Mexico as the scenery was beautiful.

I didn't like the snakes, spiders, mosquitoes, heat and thunderstorms. Most of the snakes were dead, so my Mum always told me to walk carefully through the grass. Fortunately, I only saw one live snake, but quite a few dead ones along the road. I can also remember hearing a coyote howling, when we were on a campground up in the mountains of New Mexico, which was frightening.



When we got back home the 'Evening Post' wrote a story about us. Not long after we went on the 'Jamie and Louise' morning show on BBC Radio Wales.

My friends think it is a wonderful experience, but such a long way.

**Ann Lintern**

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## Two Explorer rides

### River Tawe Banks on 30 July

We have had more than our fair share of rain for the Explorer Rides. 30 July was dramatically wet all day and Dave and I cycled to the Sail Bridge fully expecting to turn around and cycle home again. But - no, David and Nick had challenged each other to turn up whatever the weather, and Linda joined us too. As it happened we had no real rain for the actual ride, mostly a dampness in the air with mist and low cloud obscuring Kilvey Hill and surroundings, and a downpour while we were in the *Morfa Parc* pub!

We set off in stoic mood but that soon gave way to enjoyment, everyone finding that some part of the ride was previously unknown which is always satisfying. Highlights were: discovering the cyclable access to the small oasis of fishing ponds off Siemens Way, and an alternative route to the pavement along Valley Way and Ferryboat Close. The surface of the alternative route is a little rough but it's quiet and along the river. [The photo shows the ponds, but on a different day – ed.]



There are opportunities for several short loop traffic free rides in the Llansamlet and Enterprise Park area so it's definitely worth getting out there with the bike and a map.

Rhian Evans

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### Llansamlet on 30 September

On cue for an Explorer ride the day was wet – the first wet day following two weeks of superb late summer sunshine. Nick had asked me to take over the lead because he had unexpected work commitments. Early afternoon a near gale force wind was splattering rain on the windows and I wondered whether to call off the ride. But it cleared and it turned out to be a rather pleasant evening.

These rides target beginners and we actually had two on this one. Elisa was fairly new to cycling, unlike her young son, Tate, who came with her. Although only five Tate is already a proficient cyclist; he started when he was three! We were joined by Rhian, Jonny and Rob.

We left the 'Pod' by the B&Q (Morfa) car park soon after 6.30 and set off up the east branch of NCN 43 to go round the lake. We returned by the west branch. I had decided to complete this four mile loop before retiring to a pub to avoid cycling in the dark. This we did, although with the sun setting before 7.00 dusk was well under way by the time we completed the ride.

Tate did very well – he didn't fall off once nor were there tears. Four miles on his tiny bike appeared to be a piece of cake! But with such a cycling companion one needs to be alert! He would change direction without warning, suddenly stop or take off like a rocket. At that age cycling is just fun – road sense will (hopefully) come later.

Three of us rounded off the ride with a pint in the *Morfa Parc*.

David Naylor

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## A Sustrans Ranger has been busy



painting a milepost  
in the Swansea  
valley

...

The milepost is on  
NCN 43 near  
Ystradgynlais.

...

The picture on the  
left shows it before,  
and that on the right  
after Eifion painted  
it this Autumn.



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## Big Trev's Memorial ride

On 14<sup>th</sup> November 2007 Trevor Boylan, then Chairman of the Swansea and District CTC, collapsed and died on a CTC ride. It was an 'Away Day' ride: up and down the Taff Trail from near Cardiff to Aberfan. It was the day after Trevor's 73<sup>rd</sup> birthday and he had brought a cake with him which they ate over lunch. He and the seven with him were in great spirits. He collapsed on the way back, near the end of the ride. He had gone by the time the ambulance arrived.

Almost exactly a year later 14 of us repeated the ride, lunching in the same café in Aberfan. On the way up we stopped at the spot where Trevor had died and tied some flowers to a tree. Bob Evans – his successor as Chairman – read the account of the fateful ride he had written for his website ([www.wennol.co.uk](http://www.wennol.co.uk), follow the *cycling* links). Again a cake appeared – actually two because there were so many of us. And it was carrot cake – Trev's favourite.

As on Trev's last ride it was a beautiful day; the Autumn colours were at their best. The photo was taken on the recent ride.



David Naylor

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## On off-road routes

Let me start with an apparent contradiction: *Off-road cycle routes encourage more cyclists on to our roads*. For this statement to be valid off-road routes must lead to more people cycling who also cycle on-road. This article looks at the provision of off-road routes and how they can fulfil this prediction.

As cars must share road space with both cyclists and other non-motorised users so must cyclists share off-road routes with pedestrians. Shared-use paths need to be:

- designed to enable cyclists and pedestrians share the path without conflict;
- a cyclist's desire line, providing a fast direct alternative to the road;
- constructed to a high standard: smooth surface (normally machine laid asphalt), be of adequate width and be continuous across minor junctions.

The recently published *Cycle Infrastructure Design* provides criteria for achieving these aims. These include a hierarchy of (cycling) provision, both on and off-road. Top of the hierarchy comes road traffic and speed reduction, then treatment of junctions, followed by cycle lanes (ie on the carriageway), then segregated off-road paths and, finally, unsegregated shared-use paths.

Whereas there is scope in Swansea for improving the lot of cyclists by applying speed limitation (in particular 20mph) and some other on-road measures it seems to me that there is no reasonable alternative to our existing shared-use paths, ie NCN 4 to the west and south and NCN 43 to the east; they are in line with the hierarchy. What needs to be done is to improve their quality and provide better links to them.

A contentious issue is whether or not a shared-use path should be divided into cycle and pedestrian lanes. This depends on its usage and its width. There is a case for segregation if the path is at least 3m wide and more than about 200 cyclists per hour use it. The existing subdivision of much of the Swansea foreshore path meets these criteria, as does the narrower undivided Clyne Valley path.

A further factor (made in a letter from me published in Newsletter No, 2 which I think worth repeating) is that paths which are *linear*, in the sense that they link destinations, should be divided (provided they meet the above criteria), but that paths which are destinations in themselves should not. Thus the subdivision of the foreshore path between Blackpill and Sketty Lane serves a useful purpose because it is in this sense linear, but where the path runs alongside the Blackpill Lido the white dividing strip should be removed because this is an area where people – particularly children – congregate. Here cyclists need to know that they must be especially careful.

Off-road routes serve both as a place for beginners to gain confidence and to provide a direct and convenient route for cyclists in general. The apparent conflict here is not as bad as it would seem because most commuters use the path at different times to beginners and pedestrians.

The perception that cyclists are a hazard to pedestrians on shared-use paths is exaggerated. There are incidents, but these rarely result in serious injury; this cannot be said of road incidents. *Wheelrights* in collaboration with the Council earlier this year produced a *Shared Path Code*. This is a doubled sided A5 poster which encourages kids to use the foreshore path responsibly. (It is on the *Various* page of [www.wheelrights.org.uk](http://www.wheelrights.org.uk), near the bottom.)

Education, such as our Shared Path Code attempts, and, paradoxically, an increase in the number of cyclists can be expected to reduce the number of incidents on our shared-use paths. Also an increase in cycling on our roads will make them safer for cyclists.

We need our off-road paths to be really good so that they do indeed bring more cyclists on to the roads.

David Naylor