



Wheelrights

the Swansea Bay cycle campaign group



Newsletter No. 63 Spring 2023

www.wheelrights.org.uk

Cycle provision in Swansea.



There is some new infrastructure. The cycle shelter featured in the photo appeared recently outside W.H. Smith's in the city centre; work on the foreshore path in West Cross and Mumbles is due to start soon; it is underway on Gorseinon Road; and at last work has started on the GAP (Gower Access Path) across Clyne Common.

Decent infrastructure is key to getting people on bikes and there is much that needs to be done. *Wheelrights* have recently focussed on barriers and thanks to our efforts some which were impassable to trikes and wheelchairs have been replaced.

Another matter which, thanks to the new Highway Code, should have priority is for shared paths to have the right of way across uncontrolled junctions. An example is the SUP along Morfa Road. Here priority for path users is needed across the minor junctions, eg by the use of blue surfacing as by the Secret Café on the foreshore and on Mayals Road.

This issue

Contents

- P. 2. Local rides.
- P. 3. My Trike: Freedom and Barriers.
- P. 4. BikeAbility Xmas Ride & Boat Trip.
- P. 5. BikeAbility Wales needs help.
- P. 6. Cycling in a Cyclone.
Gower Cycling Festival
- P. 7. Cycle Path Redundancy.
- P. 8. Forthcoming Events.
Mulga Bill's Bicycle (Part 2).

Copy deadline

Material for the next issue should be sent to David Naylor by mid May. (Email: david@davidjnaylor.plus.com)

First, advice about what local organised rides are on offer. Later, on p.6, a note about the Gower Cycling Festival in August which CTC Swansea are reviving.

On p.3 Tracey tells us how important her trike is for getting around. This is followed by a couple of articles about *BikeAbility*: Mike Cherries farewell do and a plea for help. Then John Sayce tells us of an event in NZ which warns us what to expect from climate change.

On p.8 Bill Gannon draws our attention to cyclists' needs when cycle paths are icy or flooded. And, finally, the rest of the poem we published in the last issue.

David Naylor

Chairman

John Sayce, 46 Lon Cadog,
Cwmgwyn, Swansea SA2 0TN.
Phone: 01792 537226.
Email: john.sayce@ntlworld.com

Secretary

Dareyoush Rassi, Ringing Stones,
Mayals Road, Swansea SA3 5DH.
Phone: 07974 784786.
Email: d.rassi@swansea.ac.uk

Treasurer

Chris Walsh, 8 Emily Court,
Swansea SA1 8RA.
Phone: 07941 823729.
Email: c.walsh@ntlworld.com

Local Rides

With spring just round the corner some of you will be wondering what is on offer by way of organised rides. For a start there are the following three sources: CTC Swansea (The local member group of *Cycling UK*), the U3A and *Wheelrights'* Cappuccino Rides; and there are others, details of which can be found on the web. Here is some information about these three.

First, note that for the *Cycling UK* and U3A rides you are expected to be a member of CUK and U3A respectively. If you are not a member already you are allowed on one or two trial rides before joining. While you don't need to be a *Wheelrights* member to join a Cappuccino ride needless to say we would be pleased if you are.

CTC Swansea

Rides ranging from the relatively short and easy paced to faster longer rides are offered, usually on Wednesdays and Sundays. They are all-day rides. In addition there are shorter *ad hoc* 'coffee' rides, usually on Friday mornings. They take place throughout the year. Details can be found on www.cyclinguk.org/local-groups/swansea-and-west-wales.

A number/letter grading system is used with the number indicating the nature of the ride: its length, whether hilly or flat, etc; and the letter the pace. Thus a 2A ride would be a gentle ride at an easy pace, perhaps a not too hilly 30 miles; a 4C could be a challenging 60 miler at a brisk pace. Most of the local rides are between 1A and 3C The number range is 1-5 and the pace from A-E. Details of the grading system can be found in the Notice Board section of the above website.

Of particular note this year is that the group are reviving the Gower Cycling Festival. It is to run from 24 to 28 August. See the article about it on p.6.

U3A

Interrupted by Covid the Swansea U3A Cycling Group rides again. Many thanks to Pete Clarke who convened them pre-covid. John Lambert has now taken over from him.

You need to be a member of U3A, but joining is easy, isn't expensive and provides all sorts of other opportunities. (Visit <https://swanseau3a.wildapricot.org/>)

The Group aims to provide relaxed and sociable cycling rides, normally 20 to 35 miles at an agreeable pace on cycle tracks and minor roads. They include a coffee or lunch stop.

The rides normally take place on the first Monday of the month. See the U3A website

Cappuccino

Easy rides, mainly on cycle tracks, of around 25 miles at a leisurely pace, with at least one stop for a Cappuccino. They normally take place on a Tuesday or a Wednesday between April and October, depending on the weather.

Allyson Evans (who convenes them) hopes to start them around 11/12th April.

If you are new to the rides please contact Allyson and she will add you to her list and email you about forthcoming rides. Her contact details are on the Rides/Commutes page of www.wheelrights.org.uk. The rides are also listed on the Events page of that website.

Last year we didn't have to cancel any rides due to the weather, so let's hope for the same again this year.

My Trike: Freedom and Barriers

I love my e-trike. I lost the sight in my right eye ten years ago and it is the answer to how I keep pedalling. I live in Mumbles, so I'm lucky enough to be able to get to the prom and enjoy the feeling of the wind in my hair as I fly around the best bay in the world. I'll even use it to go to Langland and Caswell Bays for a swim. However, I've only ever once successfully pedalled back up the hill at Caswell. The trike is 30kg after all, and it's a steep hill. I visit my Mum in Killay and pedal up Gower Road from the Railway Inn. Pedalling to the Marina and the city centre is a doddle, but my lot as a triker is not a perfect one.

The trike can tip over if a back wheel lifts. So, uneven cambers, drains and potholes can be perilous at times. Sometimes, I have to dismount to navigate barriers, obviously interrupting my flow. And so it was that after a *Wheelrights'* meeting last Autumn John Sayce asked me to help with highlighting tight barriers on the NCN in Llansamlet. John explained that quite a few of the barriers were so narrow that even bicycles could not get through them without dismounting. By means of photographic evidence I wanted to help John make the Council aware that the barriers needed to be widened to offer access for all. If my trike couldn't get through, then neither could wheelchairs, mobility scooters and prams. [Ed: not to mention cargo bikes!]



It was a perfect dry autumn day when John and I set off for Llansamlet to do our photo shoot. I was surprised at the number of barriers that were inaccessible to me (as the photo illustrates). With the sub-standard barriers photographed, John was able to contact the Council to make the case for them to be widened. I was happy to help and delighted to feel part of the conversation to improve access for bikes and trikes through *Wheelrights*. Now I want to see the trike community of Swansea thrive and grow.

Tracy Anstee

—o0o—

BikeAbility Xmas Ride and Boat Trip

The last couple of years' Xmas celebrations have been slightly on the muted side, to say the least. It was therefore, so nice this year to have a "proper" *BikeAbility* get together, to include volunteers, users and supporters of the wonderful charity that is *BikeAbility*.

A collection of various Christmas characters gathered at the *BikeAbility* HQ at Duvant on a cold but thankfully dry Saturday morning in early December. The group included Santas, Elves, Reindeer and other tinsel clad cyclists. Some were on two wheels, others on three or four depending on ability, thereby making the ride accessible to all. Once the various groups were sorted and the obligatory pictures taken, we set off to make our way down the Clyne Valley path. The route then took us along the sea front to the Marina where the Copper Jack boat was waiting to transport us back in time.

The Copper Jack is a community boat which takes passengers up the River Tawe to explore the history of Swansea together with local flora and fauna. A very informative and entertaining talk was give by volunteer Mark, about the history of the docks and of the long-gone industries which once dominated the lower Swansea Valley riverside. The Copper industry in particular, put Swansea on the world stage for copper smelting in the 19th century and ultimately shaped Swansea into the city it is today. Many of the structures are in now in ruins but regeneration to protect the history and heritage of the area is well underway. Penderyn Whiskey are in the process of restoring and repurposing a couple of the old buildings and a new distillery and visitor centre will be opening early next year. In addition a new pontoon is being built alongside, so that Copper Jack will be able to stop there for tours and a tippie.

Hot drinks and snacks aboard the boat were very welcome as we glided peacefully up river, almost to the Swansea.com stadium, more familiarly know as The Liberty. At this point we turned around and headed back down river. All too soon, our boat was back docking at the Marina where we split up into various cafes and restaurants for a well deserved lunch. We then had to make our way back to *BikeAbility*, and on some bikes this turned out a lot more strenuous than coming down. In particular, a heavy electric wheelchair bike with a dead battery!

A fun day out was had by all and huge thanks to all at *BikeAbility* for organizing it.

Dawn Aplin



The ride starts at Duvant.

BikeAbility Wales needs help.

Wheelrights has had a long partnership with *BikeAbility* who are based at Dunvant Rugby Club (just off the Clyne Valley bike path). It is the only cycling charity in Swansea, and several of its staff and volunteers are active members of *Wheelrights*.

Although *BikeAbility* continues its core activities of providing fun supervised bike riding sessions for a wide range of abilities, in recent years it has developed a range of different services aimed at the Swansea community and beyond.

They now provide bike training courses ranging from absolute beginners, and young children to adults. These are at all the National standards levels. These courses run on-site at Dunvant, but can be taken to the customers, eg in schools and workplaces.

BikeAbility are becoming a source of expertise and advice regarding E-bikes, and have a range for trying out at the centre. They also store cargo e-bikes for *Sustrans*, who are offering them to local businesses at low or no cost!

They manage and service the University Santander bike scheme, and you might have seen Mark or Chris using the electric powered trailer to move these heavy bikes from station to station. The photo shows Mark doing this.

BikeAbility have moved into the bike rental business and are now the only place where bikes for the whole family can be hired. Being sited on NCN Route 4, on the edge of Gower, it's a great centre to rent bikes to explore the beautiful parts of Gower and bike paths to Mumbles and Llanelli.



The staff are a cheerful enthusiastic bunch, so if its advice about which e-bike or trike you need, or a training course to boost your on-road riding confidence, *BikeAbility* is there for you.

But they now need new trustees to continue the close partnership with *Wheelrights*. I am stepping down as trustee (after several years). The trustees comprise a solid group which includes several women. I have found the commitment to be approx. two hours per month; the meetings are a mixture of on-line and face to face, and are usually arranged early evening or around any work or family commitments. *BikeAbility* are also seeking a new treasurer as Rob Wachowski has just stepped down after many years in this role.

If you are interested and wish to discuss it more please contact Cez at *BikeAbility* or myself on 07551 538825,

Nick Guy

—o0o—

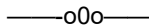
Cycling in a cyclone?

Cyclone Gabrielle has swept into New Zealand and dumped an enormous amount of rain just outside Napier, where we are currently staying. Even in our fourth floor flat we could feel and hear the buffeting winds and torrential rain. In two nearby valleys, the rivers broke their banks and carried bridges, trees, houses and even shipping containers downstream. The maelstrom left behind is heart-breaking to behold; especially so for those who do not know the whereabouts of their nearest and dearest.

We were all warned not to go out and even I heeded the warning until the worst had passed over. The electricity and internet for the whole of Napier was lost after the one critical substation for the city was inundated with five feet of water. So, if I go out, there will be little traffic, as all the shops, garages, offices and pubs are unable to function. Wrong! There are cars everywhere, cruising up and down. What's this all about?

I am able to cycle in areas where cars are stopped and get to see the flood water sloshing back and forth out of people's homes. It gets to within 20 metres of a friend's home as they have been told to pack up ready to evacuate. The kiwis with BBQs and gas cookers have been excellent, rallying around, providing meals and hot drinks for many of us. I drop into a café and speak to an elderly couple who have been washed out of their brand new home. Only now do they realise it's been built on an old swamp and was just two or three feet above the normal water table, which has now risen four feet. When will global warming finally get through to planners? The developers, of course are long gone!

John Sayce



Gower Cycling Festival

This will be held over five days from Thursday 24th to Monday 28th August.

The festival will feature up to three daily rides catering for a wide range of cycling abilities. There will be short, flat 8 - 10 mile rides for families with children; intermediate rides of 15 - 30 miles for regular, experienced riders; and more challenging and hilly rides of up to 65 miles.

The rides will take advantage of Gower's stunning natural beauty, as well the exceptional cycle paths and quiet lanes that wind through the greater Swansea area, and the scenic, hilly terrain extending into Carmarthenshire and Neath/Port Talbot. Family friendly rides will largely be on traffic-free cycle paths.

As with our regular club rides, the emphasis will be on social, group riding, with none of the rides being competitive. There will be regular stops to regroup at junctions and the top of climbs, and for longer rides a lunch stop. They will have a specified ride leader, a back marker and one other support rider. We operate a 'no drop' policy, meaning no rider gets left behind.

For more information contact me; email: revenant@gmx.co.uk. For details visit <https://www.cyclinguk.org/group/page/swansea-and-gower-cycling-festival-2023>

Mike O'Driscoll

Cycle Path Redundancy

Anyone who uses a bike throughout the year will have had two things on their mind of late: **ice** and **flooding**. Both have the same effect, which is to make cycle paths impassable.

Here are pictures which emphasise the point, both taken recently. I was lucky to get through Garth Road by freewheeling. I turned back at Pluck Lake. Despite this, cyclists are advised *never* to cycle through a flood, and I can attest to this, since I once cycled into an open manhole! Another issue has been flooding of the tunnel underneath Fabian Way SW of Briton Ferry Bridge, which has seen cyclists dragging their bikes across the A483, dodging high speed traffic.



Garth Road, NCR43, w3w.co/jungle.branched.career



Pluck Lake, SWA-EX-20.2, w3w.co/brass.tooth.hogs.

Impressive as pictures of flooding are, the effect of ice is far more severe. I know two cyclists who have come off this week, one of them over 70 years of age. The point is that redundancy must exist, and during icy periods the only routes that have been gritted, and which can therefore be cycled on, are roads. I personally don't want to see cycle paths gritted, since all that salt polluting the soil is damaging enough.

It is not impossible, or even difficult, to conceive of a built environment which caters for motorists, and yet does not exclude cyclists. It used to be the norm. But the persistent desire of decision makers to segregate cyclists from motorists, for our own good, is painting us into a corner. When the cycle paths become unusable, we have nowhere to go.

Decision-makers consider their job done when a path exists which can be cycled on in July. They do not consider rain, ice, darkness, high-tide, winter, being mugged or being female. They create for us a future which is *motonormative*, where it is simply expected that every cyclist also has a car. I don't care if people want to own cars – let them, go ahead. But I do care if it becomes impossible not to.

Bill Gannon

—o0o—

Forthcoming events

(This information and more is provided on the 'Events' page of www.wheelrights.org.uk.)

Wheelrights Routes Group meeting/rides.

These are usually at 10.00am on the second Saturday of each month and usually alternate between the Environment Centre and Ripples Café. The next is scheduled for 10 April.

Wheelrights public meeting.

On 26 April Ian Walker will give a talk. (Title to be decided.)

U3A and Cappuccino Rides.

The U3A rides, in limbo during the pandemic have now restarted. Allyson expects to revive the Cappuccino ride when it's warmer (See p.2.). See the Events page for both.

Other

Bike week is from 6 to 12 June.

—o0o—

Here is the rest of the poem, the first verse of which is in the previous issue (#62).

Mulga Bill's Bicycle

Twas Mulga Bill, from Eaglehawk, that sought his own abode,
That perched above the Dead Man's Creek, beside the mountain road.

He turned the cycle down the hill and mounted for the fray,
But ere he'd gone a dozen yards it bolted clean away.

It left the track, and through the trees, just like a silver streak,
It whistled down the awful slope towards the Dead Man's Creek.

It shaved a stump by half an inch, it dodged a big white-box:
The very wallaroos in fright went scrambling up the rocks,
The wombats hiding in their caves dug deeper underground,
As Mulga Bill, as white as chalk, sat tight to every bound.

It struck a stone and gave a spring that cleared a fallen tree,
It raced beside a precipice as close as close could be;
And then as Mulga Bill let out one last despairing shriek
It made a leap of twenty feet into the Dead Man's Creek.

...

Twas Mulga Bill from Eaglehawk, that slowly swam ashore:
He said, "I've had some narrer shaves and lively rides before;
I've rode a wild bull round a yard to win a five-pound bet,
But this was the most awful ride that I've encountered yet."

"I'll give that two-wheeled outlaw best; It's shaken all my nerve
To feel it whistle through the air and plunge and buck and swerve."

It's safe at rest in Dead Man's Creek, we'll leave it lying still;
A horse's back is good enough henceforth for Mulga Bill.

Brian Faulkner