



Tower Hamlets London Cycling Campaign

June 2003

large print tel 8880 6873

Subscribe!

If you are a London Cycling Campaign member in Tower Hamlets, you will receive *East London Cycling (ELC)* bi-monthly with *London Cyclist* magazine. To subscribe to the *ELCs* produced in the 'inbetween' months, (or all the newsletters if you're not a member of Tower Hamlets LCC) contact **Alix Stredwick 8880 6873** alix@towerhamletswheelers.org.uk

Ikeda Lad and Fiona Reid road-tested the Wheelers *Be Visible* kit during the second **Wheelers Workshop** session in April when twenty people were helped to fix their bikes by Wheelers who were on-hand to give advice. John Biggs, chair of the Greater London Authority's transport committee, helped launch the Workshop in March. Saturdays of **May 31** and **June 28** see the next two sessions, for which a donation of £1 or £2 is suggested. This is still a bargain and you'll meet friendly local cyclists and definitely learn something about your bike! **11am-3pm, 'The Boxing Club', Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road, last Saturday of the month. Tel 7515 9905**



BIKE WEEK

Join in with Bike Week 14-22 June - there is bound to be an event or two for you! (or three, or four...) Check out the website, or call Owen 7515 9905, for full details.

Family Cycling Fun Day Sat 14, 12-4pm Victoria Park, Royal Gate East, Grove Road

Eastway Cycling Day Sun 15, 12-5pm Eastway Cycle Circuit, Temple Mill Lane **Ride to**

Eastway 11:30am Green Bridge, Mile End Park

Monday Morning Breakfast Mon 16 & Tues 17, 8-10am Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel Road plus **Weird Bikes Roadshow** 10am-5pm

Ride: The Good, The Bad & the Advanced Stop Line Mon 16, 7:30-9pm Stepney Green tube

Cyclists' Breakfast Wed 18, 7:30-9:30am Narrow Street at Ropemakers Fields

Ride: East End on Screen Wed 18, 7:30-9:30pm, Royal London Hospital

Ride: Useful Places Tour Thurs 19, 7:30pm-9pm, top of Green Bridge, Mile End Park

Ride: Midsummer

Help! Last year's Bike Week was a great success, a really enjoyable experience that helped to build the Wheelers team. This year we've already got more volunteers to help it run smoothly, but we can never have too many! Please get in touch (details left & below)

Madness Sat 21, 2am (yes!) Beigel Bake, Brick Lane

The Great Beigel Race Sat 21, 10am, Beigel Bake, Brick Lane

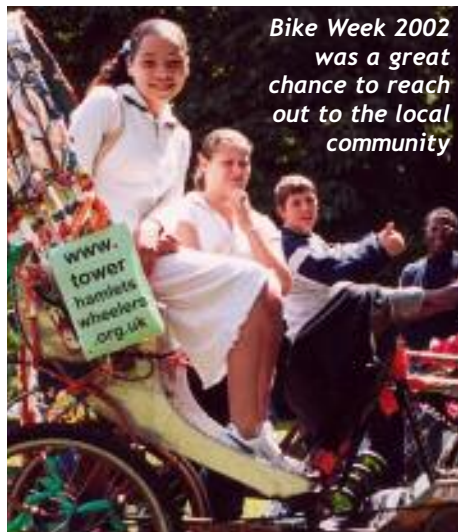
Ride: Pedalling Picnic Sun 22, 10:30am, top of Green Bridge, Mile End Park

ON THE MOVE CONTACTS If you're late turning up you may be able to catch up: **Owen** 07903 018970 **Alix** 07903 606330

Found Funding!

Our Bike Buddy scheme, Bike Recycling and Workshop have won further funding additionally to the council's grant: £4,456 from the Community Chest, a fund administered in Tower Hamlets by the St Katherine & Shadwell Trust. **Help us spend it!!** This is a great chance for us to provide a package of measures that can help more people to start cycling but we need some helping running the project. There are several discreet parts which need co-ordinating, e.g. bike recycling, Workshop manager, 'before and after' research.... you don't have to be technically adept to do the first two either; just organised and enthusiastic!

Please contact Alix if you would like to chip in, whatever way you like: **8880 6873** alix@towerhamletswheelers.org.uk



www.towerhamletswheelers.org.uk

Projects

Diary of a non-cyclist who turned

Bal Khela is one of the first 'new cyclists' we've adopted in our Bike Buddy scheme. This is her self-penned story of learning to ride a bike!

The growing congestion, pollution, cost and time of using public transport both in Spitalfields and outside the fringe areas of the City often found me dreaming of cycling as an alternative.

After all, cycling is environmentally sound, keeps you fit and could even save time. But the very idea seemed impossible to me as a non-cyclist. This beginner with little or no balance knew it was a pipe dream without help.

Indeed, the very idea of sitting on a bike caused me distress, as I feared keeling over with the weight crushing my tiny body and spokes scratching my little legs.

I am an intelligent woman of 33 unable to cycle but reluctant to ask for help to sort out this common problem. The government provides little funding despite the stretched public transport system and calls for people to leave their cars at home. Without help, my cycling ambition even as a staunch environmentalist was an uphill struggle.

This self-pity and negativity continued until my lovely boyfriend, a regular cyclist, heard me talk about my unfulfilled cycling desire. He decided to take it upon himself to teach me, at least how to balance and then move on to cycling without fearing the pedal of death at every turn.

But first I needed a suitable bike - my boyfriend decided that bike ownership was pivotal as it

would help to create a pride in my newly desired mode of transport.

Initially, shop assistants and my conniving boyfriend told me that my new little red bike required a high seat posting, much to my dismay. This was more like the kiss of death rather than the blooming of spring flowers. It meant I could only touch the floor with the tips of my big toes - creating a new found fear of heights.

There was no point telling me that this was the correct position adopted by all cyclists and would help me ride long distances without damaging my knees. What about the rest of my body?

But I took the bike out accompanied by my long suffering boyfriend who occasionally would let go to hear my yelps and screams. This may have been the correct position but my little scared and contorted face certainly knew otherwise! It would all go horribly wrong upon realising I was cycling and that my boyfriend was no longer holding the bike.

In the end I told my boyfriend that low seating would help me get accustomed to using the bike without feeling out of control. I promised I would learn to ride if the seat was lowered to the extent that the back of my heels could touch the ground.

This foolish promise literally forced me to cycle with my now

distant boyfriend from the shop to Spitalfields on a path with pedestrians encouraging me to continue!

This major turning point in my life allowed me to realise that I needed time and support to learn how to ride a bicycle. Over time, I was slowly eased out of the irrational fears developed because of not learning how to ride a bike at an early age.



Learning to ride as an adult can be tough - but not with the right support

I can now turn corners, cycle uphill and downhill without fearing the worst whether in public spaces, footpaths and parks with a new awareness and freedom. But roads suddenly presented themselves as another matter.

My boyfriend's long-suffering experience as a teacher came to an abrupt end because his actions on the road as a cyclist were automatic. This made it hard for him to teach me how to relate to cars as a cyclist or road user because for him it was second nature. Teaching the non-road user without the relevant skills was irresponsible because the stakes were much higher than just falling off a bike.

The non-aware cyclist can cause fatal accidents for oneself or other road users. And I found roads and cars so unfriendly as an environmentalist let alone as a cyclist subjected to fast and aggressive motorists who made

me swerve wildly into people, other cars or anything else in the vicinity.

But then a riverside ride led to accidentally bump into a City Hall all-abilities bike event introducing me to the Tower Hamlets Wheelers and their Bike Buddy scheme. Bike Buddies are people who are not qualified to train cyclists but will accompany non-road users on journeys, for confidence and support.

I explained that although I could now cycle I was not quite ready to use roads or feel comfortable with all my cycling techniques. Extortionate rates of cycle training lessons were actively discouraging less well-off new cyclists like myself.

Teaching people how to ride was a scheme offered by Lambeth Council but no such scheme had been adopted by Tower Hamlets Council even though an acute traffic problem exists.

But the Wheelers' Bike Buddy scheme offers free lessons at the London School of Cycling. Once the necessary skills have been learned to go on the road, you will be paired up with a Bike Buddy who gives advice on quiet local routes, and can help you fix punctures. A low-cost recycled bike and easy groups rides in the local vicinity are other elements of the 'package'.

The good work of Wheelers and my boyfriend means I will ride a bike and commit myself to using environmentally friendly mode of transport. But Mayor Ken Livingstone needs to encourage a united approach by all London councils, and more government funding is required.

Watch out for the next article when I use roads with my new bike buddy...
(continued on page three)

Editor's notes (continued from page two)

Tower Hamlets council is bidding for funding from Transport for London to provide adult cycle training next year. If any Wheelers would like to earn a bit of extra cash being trainers then contact Lyndal Peters, former cycling officer 7364 6704 lyndal.peters@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Transport for London (TfL) has a Cycling Centre of Excellence (CCE) that jointly organised with the London Cycling Campaign the all-abilities cycling day at City Hall which

Tower Hamlets Wheelers attended. The CCE's purpose is to promote cycling and implement the London Cycle Network Plus (LCN+) and is funded by the Mayor. But is it enough?

Central government's Department for Transport provided a Cycling Projects Fund of £2million last year and Wheelers put in a bid but were not successful. We have put in another bid to the second round of this fund. We should know if it's successful some time in June.

Missing Campaigns

This newsletter is not as packed full of stuff as I thought it would be! This is not because we are doing less - in fact quite the opposite, we're busier than ever - but as always I have left the newsletter to the last minute and haven't had the time to edit and format lots of news articles. And now the 'last minute' is even earlier for the newsletters that go with *London Cyclist* because the distribution system has changed and LCC office requires the borough group

newsletters earlier! Excuses excuses! Plus, we can no longer use A3 size - this will be reserved for the 'inbetweeners' monthly newsletters, to which you can subscribe. I didn't get time to do a May newsletter at all but never fear because hopefully by the time you get this there will be a whole stack of extra information on the website, for instance the second part of Lyndal's interview, and information about our current **campaigns** which I have neglected here.... sorry..

Bike Rides

Ride reports

pic: Steve Collins



There are loads of rides on which to report - but there simply isn't the room here! Again our wonderful website will reveal more:

www.towerhamletswheelers.org.uk/rides

Here you will find reports about the Easter trips to Herne Hill velodrome and the Easter break in East Anglia (coming soon at least), plus our ride to the Tower of London (above) that resulted in a campaign to improve cycle parking. Gary's 125-mile Birthday Bikes trip is up there too, as is the fantastic Treasure Hunt, minus major giveaway picture clues in case we run it again! (hopefully - it was excellent and you're not allowed to miss the next one!).

Future rides

Tate Modern Trundle

Saturday 24 May Slow ride visiting galleries and exhibitions in and around Tower Hamlets, including of course the Tate Modern in Southwark, which has free entry. Meet 9:45am for prompt 10am start. Steve 7987 2078 or 07773 420475

Dulwich Park Recumbents

Saturday 7 June Ride down to Southwark's Dulwich Park where London Recumbents live. Try out their unusual bikes for £10 an hour - it'll be worth it! Meet 10am. Back in Tower Hamlets by 4pm. Gary 7265 9095

Dulwich Dynamo

Saturday 12 July Not a Tower Hamlets ride but lots of us are going! 120 miles to the Suffolk coast - OVERNIGHT! Meet top of the Green Bridge at 8pm for the short ride to Pub on the Park, Martello Street, London Fields, Hackney E8 to leave there at 9pm. More info from Barry Mason 07905 889005 www.greenwichcyclists.org.uk

All rides meet at the top of the Green Bridge, near Mile End Tube. Bring a spare inner tube and tyre levers etc plus food to keep you going!

Wheelers meetings

Join in the running of the group, and meet other local cyclists! We are getting more and more people coming to our meetings, on the second Wednesday of the month: 11 June and 9 July are the next ones. 7pm at 'the Boxing Club' (an arts group), Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road E14 (by Newell Street).

Wheelers socials

After the meetings we go to the Grapes pub, Narrow Street from 9pm. Every fourth Wednesday we go to a pub somewhere in Tower Hamlets from 9pm - check with Owen (below) or on the website for details.

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Who are the Tower Hamlets Wheelers?

We're your local cycle action group affiliated to the LCC - London Cycling Campaign. We campaign for safer, more pleasant & convenient conditions for cycling. We encourage more people to cycle: it's healthy, good for the environment and causes less congestion than driving. You don't have to join the LCC to be a Wheeler but we recommend it.

www.towerhamletswheelers.org.uk

Join LCC!

If you've been handed this leaflet, or have found it on your bike or in a cafe or library, you may like to know more about the London Cycling Campaign. Look at www.lcc.org.uk and consider joining the largest urban cycling campaign in the world. You'll get discounts in some bike shops, free third party insurance, *London Cyclist* magazine six times a year and loads more. Ask for a membership pack: 7928 7220 office@lcc.org.uk

Stay in touch by email

Subscribe to our email group to keep up to date with our activities and join in the debate. You won't get any spam, you can unsubscribe at any time, and you can get a regular 'digest' of topics, instead of each email. Send an email to towerhamletswheelers-subscribe@yahooogroups.com

Cycle lessons

London School of Cycling is based in nearby Hackney 7249 3779 www.londonschoolofcycling.co.uk

Cycling Training Ltd will send out a trainer anywhere in Greater London for cycling lessons, providing a bike for you if necessary. Also do maintenance classes.

7564 5990 www.cycletraining.co.uk

Take some action!

Transport for London is responsible for ensuring that road defects are fixed www.tfl.gov.uk/streetfaults They will directly fix a TfL road (large arterial roads/Red Routes e.g. A13) or they'll contact the council within 12 hours!

The Council Principle Transport Planner Lyndal Peters lyndal.peters@towerhamlets.gov.uk and Margaret Cooper, margaret.cooper@towerhamlets.gov.uk Head of Traffic & Transportation. Both at Council Offices, 60 Southern Grove, E3 4PN. Road defects: tel 7364 6658 fax 7364 6753

david.wigmore@towerhamlets.gov.uk Wheelers own pothole pot-hole page: www.towerhamletswheelers.org.uk/potholes/

Your local councillor To find out who they are and what's their address tel 7364 5000 or look at

www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/data/yourcouncil/data/councillor/index.cfm

Your MP Oona King/Jim Fitzpatrick; House of Commons, London W1A 1AA (check at www.locata.co.uk/commons)

Greater London Authority John Biggs GLA, City Hall, The Queen's Walk, SE1 2AA john.biggs@london.gov.uk

Copy any letters to Wheelers co-ordinator Maintenance & repairs

Wheelers Workshop Last Saturday of every month, Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road, E14.

Hackney LCC workshop Bit of a problem with this at the mo. Check with rosstransport@hotmail.com

Bicycle Magic Shop at 187 Whitechapel Road, nr Vallance Rd. LCC members: 5% discount (parts) 7375 2993

Council's Lifelong Learning service

Contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. Contact Alix.

July copy deadline: 29 Junel
August copy deadline: 13 July