

# Carefree Christmas Day!

So how was your Christmas morning? Up at dawn preparing dinner? Playing with excited children? Taking the opportunity to sleep off a hangover? There was yet another option!

For the third year running, Barry Mason of *Greenwich Cyclists* organised a Christmas Day cycle ride into central London, and to get into the spirit, I decorated my bike with tinsel the night before and next day, met up with THW members Gary and Steve. We took a slow ride to Cutty Sark Gardens, arriving at 11 o'clock. The roads down the Island to the foot tunnel were remarkably quiet and set the tone for the rest of the day, with children trying out their new bikes... and some their new motorised scooters. At Cutty Sark we met up with about thirty other riders of all ages, the youngest being just two, and mince pies were consumed with relish!

At 11:30, the weather warm and a little cloudy, we departed, snaking our way through the quiet streets of Greenwich following the river as closely as possible. Motorists seemed surprised at such a large group and gave us plenty of room (something to do with peace and goodwill perhaps). From Tower Bridge we made our way along the south bank passing City Hall, Southwark Cathedral, the Globe Theatre, Tate Modern, the Millennium Bridge, the Royal Festival Hall and the London Eye. Barry had published his mobile number and another 10 people joined us en route. To my surprise hundreds of tourists were out and about.

Crossing Lambeth Bridge, we proceeded to Charing Cross Road via the Houses of Parliament and Trafalgar Square. Setting off down the Mall, passing Buckingham Palace, we did a circuit of Hyde Park, exiting at Marble Arch. From there we went to Cafe du Liban, a Lebanese restaurant on Edgware Road, for a late lunch. I don't think they were expecting us (!) but they were remarkably accommodating and the food was excellent.

We left the restaurant in darkness, heading back eastwards, along Oxford Street, with the flashing lights of the bikes complementing the Christmas lights. We continued along Clerkenwell Road, Old Street and down to Aldgate, where Steve and I led the group through the canals of Wapping and back to the foot tunnel, via Narrow Street and Canary Wharf.

Here we said our goodbyes. I left to go to a family gathering whilst the Greenwich Cyclists went through the tunnel and on for more socialising. A very different day and one that I'll do again. Thoroughly recommended if you want to experience an almost traffic-free London.

**KC Jones** - The Black Knight

For details of a 1-weekend bike tutoring course in March, please contact:  
markbutland@youthaction.org.uk or tel: 020 7536 2930

## Women Wheelers

I am currently planning this year's rides diary. After chatting with some of you and observing higher attendances of women on certain rides last year, I would like to invite you to give me some feedback on this Wheelers' activity.

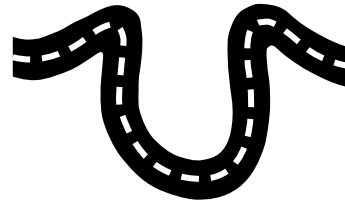
I would like to hear your preferences for rides, any concerns or issues you may have about the rides, and in particular how you believe Wheelers' rides could be made more attractive to all women.

Any other suggestions for more inclusive rides or for any other rides at all are always most welcome.

Please do contact me with your comments and ideas by email, post or phone (details above). Thanks.

**Steve C** - Rides and Socials Coordinator

Alternatively you can contact Caroline on 020 7537 0036 / caroline@towerhamletswheelers.org.uk - or Carol (details above).



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# news

FEBRUARY / MARCH 2004

THE NEWSLETTER FOR TOWER HAMLETS WHEELERS • LONDON CYCLING CAMPAIGN

## SHOP ON THE WHARF

Well, almost; only a small giant's leap from the original 'great tower' on the Isle of Dogs, you can now do your cycle-and-related shopping. Just before Christmas, *Wharf Cycles* opened up for business in the end of a long Victorian warehouse at the corner of Cuba Street and West Ferry Road. It is easy to miss on a first visit but being his third at least, THW coordinator Owen Pearson had no trouble finding his way back to review the service and stock.

**Owen's report:** In a location where the owners, Phil and Jo, hope to capture the Canary Wharf market as well as providing for local 'Islanders', several *Wheelers* have already been impressed by *Wharf Cycles'* same-day maintenance and repair service. Stocking Brompton, Giant, Mongoose and Kona bikes, with Ridgebacks soon to be added, all the usual cycle paraphernalia are also available, with a 10% discount to LCC members on accessories.

Pictured here, Phil (*right*) and Jo (*left*) have involved themselves swiftly with community activities: they hosted the Wheelers' December meeting and will hold bike-fixing lessons for local children in the spring. In the summer they plan to provide a bike rental service that may include Brompton folding bikes.

### Why not drop by and say hello

Wharf Cycles, 21-23 Westferry Road E14 5JH • (entrance in Cuba Street, opposite *Rogue Trader* pub)  
020 7987 2255; www.wharfcycles.co.uk • Hours: Mon-Fri 8.30-7; Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 10-4



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www.towerhamletswheelers.org.uk

# PRESS OFFICER ON BOARD

In response to an invitation for more volunteers, Tower Hamlets Wheelers have recently recruited a new Press Officer! Just before Christmas, Kerry Noble, who works in this capacity for a medical research charity, came forward and has agreed to take on the role for the group. Kerry started cycling in London about 5 years ago when she became the owner of a bicycle - an old banger - for the first time and has been cycling to work in central London from her home in the north west of the borough for a year or so - but on a younger machine. She finds it the quickest mode of transport for the journey and perfectly convenient, wearing cycle kit for the ride and changing into a suit when she arrives at the office. When possible she also cycles between commitments during her working day.

Although Kerry did ride other children's bicycles during her childhood, unlike her older brother and sister who were each given a bicycle at age thirteen, when she reached her first teenage birthday she was disappointed to receive the present of a bed and concludes that her parents must simply have entered a period of reduced prosperity!

Kerry can be contacted by email: [press@towerhamletswheelers.org.uk](mailto:press@towerhamletswheelers.org.uk) or telephone: 07050 264059

Meanwhile the Wheelers are still on the lookout for a Campaign's Officer and a Secretary. No previous experience is necessary, (though the Secretary must be a member of LCC). If you would like to take on one of these roles, or be involved in any other way, please get in touch (address, emails, and phone numbers on the back page).

## message from the editor

Do you have a suggestion for a report or notice for this newsletter? Or would you like to write your own article?

Please contact the Editor by post, email or phone (details on back page)

Your contributions for the next edition will be needed by mid-March

## DIARY DATES DIARY DATES DIARY

- FEBRUARY**
- SUN 8TH **RIDE** (joining Little Green Ride), LCC ride run by Sue Dorey: short train journey to Stevenage, ride thro' Hertfordshire countryside; approx 20 miles : Meet 9:15am top of Green Bridge, Mile End Park
  - WED 11TH **MONTHLY MEETING** 7-8.30pm : Venue tba. Everyone welcome
  - SUN 15TH **RIDE** along south River Thames path to Erith & possibly on to Blue Water; approx 40 miles : Meet 9:30am top of Green Bridge ◦ WED 25TH **SOCIAL** The Dove : Broadway Market E8 - 9pm
  - SAT 28TH **WORKSHOP** 11am-3pm : Limehouse Town Hall
- MARCH**
- WED 10TH **MONTHLY MEETING** 7-8.30pm : Venue tba. Everyone welcome
  - SUN 14TH **RIDE** Easy pace along flat country lanes of Kent; approx 30 miles; includes 1hr train journey : Meet 9:30am top of Green Bridge ◦ WED 25TH **SOCIAL** Half Moon : Mile End Road (Next to Stepney Green station) 9pm ◦ SAT 27TH **WORKSHOP** 11am-3pm : Limehouse Town Hall, (incl talk by Gary Cummins: 'Preparing for Touring'; 12-2pm) ◦ SUN 28TH **RIDE** Possibly Sustrans route - Tbc.

**Mr Bike's TOP TIP**  
Most gear changing problems and transmission noise can be attributed to a dry chain...  
**KEEP IT OILED**

## TRUST'S BIKE POOL LAUNCHES

January 6th 2004 saw the official launch of Barts and The London (BLT) NHS Trust's Bike Pool Scheme as part of their Green Travel Plan. The bicycles are available to staff travelling between the Trust's sites for their work. The £2000 funded scheme has so far acquired four fully kitted out bikes from *Bicycle Magic* in Whitechapel, including dynamo lights, locks, panniers and a bell for each. Helmets, high visibility belts and trouser clips are also provided.

- For more information about the scheme please contact Lisa Howkins on: 020 7601 8482. or by email: [Lisa.Howkins@bartsandthelondon.nhs.uk](mailto:Lisa.Howkins@bartsandthelondon.nhs.uk)



(Left to right): **Lisa Howkins** BLT Transport Liaison Manager; **Lyndal Peters** LBTH Principal Transport Planner; **Charles Gutteridge** Medical Director, BLT (on one of the Pool bikes); **Owen Pearson** Tower Hamlets Wheelers Coordinator; **Ray Carr** BLT Facilities Manager

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## TECHNICAL SHOWCASE

by **Mr Bike** the bicycle consultant

### THAT DEFLATED FEELING !

Since the invention of the pneumatic tyre the bane of the cyclist has been punctures, which tend to happen at the most inopportune moments. Instead of suffering in silence or flying into a rage, there are some simple precautions you can take. The most important are to keep your tyres inflated to the correct pressure, try to stay out of gutters and not ride up and down pavements at speed. On the tyre wall you will find the manufacturer's recommended pressure in pounds per square inch (PSI); on a regular basis, check the pressure with a gauge and inflate if necessary. If you don't have a gauge, then inflate the tyre until you cannot depress it with your thumb and then inflate it some more. If your tube is fitted with a Schrader valve, which is the same as you'll find on a car, then use a garage pump to inflate the tyre, BUT BE WARNED: introduce air a LITTLE at a time and constantly check the gauge. Visually, check your tyres often for wear and remove any objects that may be embedded in them.

Your rear tyre wears at twice the rate of the front. As a commuter, and assuming your tyres are the same make and were fitted at the same time, you can swap the rear with the front when the rear shows signs of wear thus enabling you to fit new tyres on both wheels simultaneously. At renewal time you have two options to help reduce the risk of a puncture; fit a pair of protective plastic strips between the tube and tyre or fit a pair of puncture-resistant tyres, which have a Kevlar belt or dense foam under the tread. The strips are about £10 a pair and the tyres about £45 a pair, but well worth it just for peace of mind; however you must still adhere to the instructions above. Even with this extra protection, there's no guarantee that you'll never get a puncture, so I recommend highly that you learn to fix them (THW run regular workshops) and carry the necessary tools with you at all times, as well as a spare inner tube, pump and disposable gloves. If you do get a puncture and don't have the tools or the necessary skills, don't continue riding because you'll damage the wheel; if possible take the bike to a shop; most can repair a puncture quickly; expect to pay between £6-8.

## ICELAND THERMALS

In the last issue, Gary Cummins set the scene for the trip he took with 17 others c/o the CTC. He concludes his story...

Iceland is located on the mid-Atlantic fault, where two tectonic plates meet. This accounts for our visits to erupting geysers at the appropriately named Geyser and lots of hot thermal pools; in fact almost every camp site seemed to have a hot pool nearby, where aching muscles could be relaxed while drinking a can of rather expensive (£3.60) Icelandic beer and breaking the ice, metaphorically, with other members of the tour.

Visits to spectacular waterfalls were opportunities for Halldor to demonstrate his knowledge of- and pride in- the Icelandic Sagas. Bubbling boiling sulphurous springs became impromptu lunch-stops, and as we slogged along the pumice stone tracks we didn't envy the other tourists jammed sild-like\* into their muscular 4x4s, cocooned and insulated from this fabulous landscape. I even cycled across the 'Moon', well, the terrain where the Apollo astronauts trained at least; the Icelandic geography simulates this better than anywhere else on Earth.

As we got deeper into the desert-like countryside, the campsites and shops became more basic, but the landscape ever more spectacular. By day 12, following a dreadful night's rainstorm that had demolished two of our groups' bivouacs and made tentless dozens of other campers on the site, conversation over breakfast turned to the joys of the departure lounge at Reykjavik airport. But the melancholy gripes disappeared that morning as, catching the coattails of the storm and a dry gale-force tailwind, our cycle computers clocked up 30mph on the flat and, barely pedalling, we giggled and raced, hurtling at speed into countless fords, covering the morning's 44 mile ride in under 3 hours.

The gloom returned that night. As we bubbled like our morning eggs in an outdoor thermal tub, talk was now of the tour's highlights and the realisation that suddenly it was over too quickly. The agony of trying to dry laundry and of erecting tents in the rain had been forgotten, as had two weeks of cooking meals over meths stoves. So forgotten in fact, that I'm off to buy a tent.

Gary Cummins

\*sild is Icelandic herring

To participate in a CTC tour, you must be a full member of the *Cyclists Touring Club*: tel 0870 873 0061; <<http://www.ctc.org.uk>> • Halldor Gardarsson of *Bluebiking*: tel/fax +354 565 2089; <<http://frontpage.simmet.is/bluebiking/>>