

East London Cyclist

www.wheelers.org.uk

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THE NEWSLETTER FOR TOWER HAMLETS WHEELERS • LONDON CYCLING CAMPAIGN

A tale of two bridges (and a tunnel...)

Bad news unfortunately on the proposed new Thames cycling and pedestrian bridge from Canary Wharf to Rotherhithe (as featured in East London Cyclist August/September 2008) – it has been cancelled...



“A Southwark Council Officer told participants of the "Transport Workshop" at the Canada Water Area Actions Plan (CWAAP) Public Meeting on 4 February 2009 that the Mayor of London has announced that Transport for London (TfL) will not be funding the Rotherhithe-Canary Wharf Thames Bridge Project. This is a great disappointment. Cllr. Paul Noblet and Simon

Hughes MP have separately stated at last night's meeting that they will try see how they may help rescue this project.”

But better news on another bridge, albeit rather shorter and less glamorous – the Sustrans Connect 2 scheme for building a new bridge over the canal from Mile End park to Meath Gardens is moving forwards, with the “memorandum of understanding” due to be signed with Tower Hamlets Council before the end of March. Work has in fact started on the site preparation and hopefully the bridge will be finished by Christmas. With the future links either side if it, this bridge forms part of a two mile Greenway linking Bethnal Green to Victoria Park and the Olympic Park. There will be Green CRISPs (Cycle Route Implementation Stakeholder Plans) held soon to look at the link routes – Wheelers will be asked to participate in these and so if you are interested in being involved please let us know.

And finally our old nemesis the Greenwich Foot Tunnel is to be substantially refurbished thanks to an award of £11.5 million from the Government's Community Infrastructure Fund (funding also covers its near twin the Woolwich tunnel). This is likely to include – new lifts (hurrah), refurbished stairways, new CCTV and communications system, new lighting, new signing, leak sealing, and historical information murals. The less exciting part of the news is that completion is targeted for March 2011 so we have quite a long time to put up with the existing facilities. It may be tempting fate to even mention it but the South Lift has been seen in action in the last week after a prolonged outage since about December. No word yet on whether they will be installing chicanes as in the Woolwich tunnel, either as part of this work or before. ■

Caroline Fenton

AGM

Tower Hamlets Wheelers' AGM will be held on Wednesday 8th April at St Margaret's House, Old Ford Road at 19.30.

All the officers retire but can offer themselves for re-election. Our current official posts are: Coordinator, Secretary, Treasurer, Rides Coordinator, Campaigns Officer, Event Coordinator, Newsletter Editor and Press Officer. Please note that the Press Officer post is currently vacant. Also our Events Coordinator Keith Jones is standing down after many years of excellent work so this role definitely needs to be filled. If you would be

interested in putting your name forward for any of these please feel free to contact the current post holder or the Coordinator to find out what is involved. (www.wheelers.org.uk/contacts.html) Alternatively, if you would like to play a more active and formal role on the committee but don't think any of those roles are quite right for you, please talk to us anyway as we would be happy to create a new specific role or you could just be a general committee member and help with various activities.

We are hoping to have a few guest representatives of other organisations related to cycling at the meeting so we can discuss what each organisation can do best and how we can work together in the future. The meeting will be followed by refreshments (nibbles and drinks) and everyone is welcome. ■

Caroline Fenton

My bike and I...

First in a series, with Tracy explaining that having an 8 month-old son and cycling are not incompatible....

I knew that I would need a new bike with a new baby around - it seemed a perfect excuse to replace my trusty old Trek with something more sleek and modern. Just after Christmas, with spring just a sniff away, 8 month Wilf and I spent a very pleasant day in the company of Steve, in search of my new steed, to be fitted with a baby seat of course.

My new Specialized Vienna is a delight to ride, and even easier on the eye. Riding with a baby on board was much easier than I thought - though I do have to slow down to a halt if I need to make a slow U turn for any reason, or we over balance!

Wilf looks cute in his pirate helmet, and I love listening to his chirpy chatter as we pass dogs, birds and other items of interest. My main problem is that he has an unnerving tendency to fall asleep and then lurch sideways despite being firmly strapped in. I now try to ensure that he has just woken up from a nap before setting off, mainly to avoid being shouted at by White Van co-pilots, 'Oi, wake yer baby up!'



And when I do get to ride it without him - I get that amazing sense of freedom of travelling from a to b in London without being constrained by bus routes (not to mention the buggy). My new route from Limehouse to Rosebery Avenue via the Barbican and Clerkenwell is practically an architectural tour and on a bright winter morning, sheer joy.

Last week, I took it in for its six-week check - the bike, that is. And just for fun, I got myself a smart little wireless computer fitted. It seemed like the right thing to do.

So for now, Wilf is the youngest Tower Hamlets Wheeler.... unless of course you know better.... ■

Tracy Karkut-Law

Did you know...?

Tower Hamlets Wheelers have some useful equipment that is available for you to borrow:

We currently have a Raleigh bike, suitable for someone from about 5' up to 5'8" - you can borrow this for wheelers' rides if your own bike is off the road or maybe you have a friend or relative who doesn't have a bike and would like to join the ride

A bicycle trailer - suitable for lugging around reasonable quantities of shopping, rubbish to the tip etc

A Cristiania tricycle (www.christianiabikes.com) - as above but carries lots more stuff, could be useful for moving house!

If you are interested in any of these please contact caroline@wheelers.org.uk. We may ask for a deposit against the safe return of the item, and we need to see a valid LCC or CTC membership card. All items borrowed at your risk and you are liable for any damage to the equipment or third parties/property.

Very Vélib

Gary Cummins writes in response to the 'Way to go' article in the last issue of East London Cyclist:

... I'd like to respond to the comment in the last issue about Velib, particularly the statement: '*There have been problems also with inexperienced cyclists in the Paris Velib scheme, with accidents and at least one fatality*'.

After 20+ million trips, that is not a problem! There were more deaths among cyclists in London. Sadly, it is easy to find articles knocking cycling initiatives; a quick perusal of the Internet finds one donk-brained article, which said:

'Two users of Vélib' - which does not offer helmets - were crushed to death this year, both in collisions with lorries'.

Helmets would not have made any difference in these cases.

The problems in Paris have come from the number of bikes stolen, and the cost of replacements.

Speaking in relative terms, cycling arguably gets safer in these cities because of the increased volume of cyclists on the streets.

Please don't misunderstand me, I am not dismissive of the risk, but the actual figures associated with Velib are amazingly low compared to the overwhelming number of journeys, and number of users, with an average 70,000 trips per day with 190,000 annual pass holders, the Parisian scheme is only the most recent of many such projects operating in Europe. ■

Gary Cummins

E-Mail lists

We have two e-mail lists (aka e-groups) for you to join and keep up to date with Tower Hamlets Wheelers.

The first is our e-mail discussion group. This is our general discussion email group where all subscribers can post messages relevant to cycling and ideally Tower Hamlets related.

To join the discussion now, send a blank email to:

towerhamletswheelers-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

We have recently added a new group "thw-mailing" for people who want to keep up to date with Wheelers activities, but don't want the chatter from the regular e-group. Subscribe to this and you will get advance notice of all our forthcoming rides, events, meetings and workshop sessions, plus a few carefully selected non-THW happenings. You will also get any updates such as changes in dates/meeting arrangements/venues etc to save checking out the website. Described by the moderator as "the quiet list for busy people" you can join by sending a blank email to:

thw-mailing-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Messages sent to the Rides/Events list will automatically be sent to the discussion group so you don't need to subscribe to both lists.

More information:

<http://www.wheelers.org.uk/egroup.html>

Caroline Fenton

Gearing up for spring

Although Wheelers have been out riding all winter (well sheltering in cafes quite a lot too), spring is when we move up a gear for rides and events. We are aiming to offer plenty of variety with short, medium and long rides, some on Saturdays and some on Sundays, some on weekday evenings and the continuation of our popular monthly "breakfast ride"

We haven't yet decided on definite dates for everything but to give you a quick taste of what is to come here are some of the ideas we are working on – these will be advertised on our website and via the e-group and mailing list.

- Nature reserves of Essex - Rainham Marshes and beyond
- Pedal to pedalo - a fun ride to a park where we can swap our bikes for boats.
- Suffolk villages exploration - usually with a great tea stop thrown in
- Another weekend away - our Spring weekend sold out quickly
- Ace café evening ride - the legendary biker café on the North Circular via the canal
- Hell of the East (that's cobbles to you and me) ■

Credit crunch cycling

Okay... hands up all those who are now sick of hearing the words "Credit Crunch" and sentences starting "In the current economic climate...."

In recent months I have seen many people taking up or returning to Cycling as a cheap way of getting around in London, especially when on a tight budget. Many people are turning to their bikes that have sat unused for a while, now dug out of the shed or from the balcony, dusted down and given a new lease of life and a bit of TLC at the Wheelers monthly workshop!

Even a moderately priced new bike can pay for itself within a year when compared with the price of monthly travelcards.

So, I thought I'd see if we could find local people willing to take up the challenge of buying a bike on a budget, and to see what's possible, with a little help and advice from Tower Hamlets Wheelers.

The first to take up the challenge is Jill. Jill loves walking, especially the many towpaths and parks in the area, and wants to explore by bike. Having not ridden a bike for a long time, Jill needed a little confidence boost, so I suggested signing up for the free cycle training at BikeWorks (funded by Tower Hamlets Council.)



I went along to see Jill with instructor Neil at Bikeworks (pictured) and soon, she was riding around Victoria Park with a very big smile and even more enthusiastic than before!

We'll keep in touch with Jill and see how she gets on.... I think she may have caught the cycling 'bug'!

If you, or somebody you know would also be up for our challenge, then please get in touch with me:
RobL@wheelers.org.uk / 07973 815198

Rides and events

Please check our web site, or call the ride leader in advance, as times/details sometimes change!

March

Wednesday, 25th March

AFTERWORKER: "THE CHICKEN RUN"

How do I even begin to explain this ride?

7.00pm, Green Bridge, Mile end Park.

Contact: **David** 07790 387315

Saturday, 28th March

BICYCLE MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP

Monthly Workshop – 11am-3.00pm at Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road.

Bicycle Security Awareness: Police officers from the Limehouse Safer Neighbourhood Team will be on hand to register your bicycle, give out general security advice and take on-board any other issues.

Sunday, 29th March

BREAKFAST RIDE (EASY)

Cafe breakfast at about 9:15am, destination will be along the Lea Valley or Thames. 15-20 miles in total. Meet at 8.00am on top of the Green Bridge, Mile End Park.

Contact: **Caroline**.

April

Wednesday, 8th April

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Meet at St Margaret's House, Old Ford Road.

7.30-9.30pm - everyone welcome.

Guest speakers, drinks and nibbles.

Monday, 13th April (Easter)

LEE VALLEY/EPPING FOREST

Easy/Moderate Lee Valley ride. Meet on top of the Green Bridge, Mile End Park. Time TBC.

Sunday, 19th April

'ANIMALS'

Easy Ride. Themed ride around East London/City. Meet on top of the Green Bridge, Mile End park, 10.00am. Contact: **David**.

Saturday, 25th April

BICYCLE MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP

Monthly Workshop – 11am-3.00pm at

Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road.

Sunday, 26th April

BREAKFAST RIDE (EASY)

- See 29th March.

May

Monday, 4th May (Bank Holiday)

RIDE TO DOWNE

Moderate ride to Downe to visit Darwin's house. Time TBC. Contact: **Caroline**

Wednesday, 6th May

MONTHLY WHEELERS MEETING

Meet at St Margarets House, 21 Old Ford Road. 7.30-9.00pm - everyone welcome. Followed by a visit to a local pub from 9.15pm.

Contact: **Owen**.

Sunday, 24th May

THEMED RIDE – EAST LONDON/CITY

- Details TBC. More info on our web site.

Saturday, 30th May

BICYCLE MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP

- See 25th April

Sunday, 31st May

BREAKFAST RIDE (EASY)

- See 29th March.

Contacts

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