

with the fact that there appear to be no cyclists at all in Georgia. Dirty smelly 40-year-old cars and Mastrukas (mini buses) dominate. Pedestrians have to find subways to cross the roaring streets. Truly, a walking and cycling Hades and the perfect place for our new transport minister who has got rid of Cycling England. Georgian Railways on the other hand were spacious, colourful and bang on time. It must be said that a Rail Europe Global Pass combined with sleepers is a great way to travel. On the way back, we enjoyed six virtually consecutive sleepers—some cabins had mini bars and hand basins. Between sleepers, we had a day in the main cities along the route and thanks to the Bromptons we were able to get to the centre of each one quickly and easily from the station.

Tbilisi by Train, Bus, Baker's Van and Brompton

Adrian Oliver

The Department for Transport has released a Business Plan for 2011-2015. It's big on grants for electric cars and rolling out a recharging infrastructure, but contains no mentions of creating any bicycle or pedestrian infrastructure. Starting in January, £5000 grants to buy electric cars will be available, but projects wanting cash from the four year £560m Local Sustainable Transport Fund will have to wait until October.

The DfT wants to 'encourage sustainable local travel' and will do this by "making public transport and cycling and walking more attractive and effective, promoting lower carbon transport and tackling local road congestion." But don't hold your breath! Bidding for the new Local Sustainable Transport Fund starts and ends in December but details on the initial tranche of projects to be supported by the Local Sustainable Transport Fund won't be known until October 2011. So, there won't be any central funds for cycling until the end of 2011. One wonders about the DfT's real commitment to sustainability.

The DfT Plan – more cars now, sustainability later

Invited to the wedding of an old family friend in Tbilisi, Georgia, a country wedged between the Black and Caspian Seas, we avoided planet damaging plane travel and went overland with Bromptons as our shepas. We took 27 trains, several coaches, and two Bosphorus ferries and were given a lift in a thunderstorm by a baker to the Turkish/Georgian border. The outward route was Cologne, Vienna, Budapest, Bucharest, Istanbul, Ankara, Erzurum, Hopa, Batumi and Tbilisi. We returned via Batumi, Erzurum, Ankara, Sofia, Belgrade, Villach, Cologne and Brussels—in total 8,000 kms. In contrast to previous continental journeys not one transport staff objection was made to our Bromptons and in Tbilisi, the wedding party made a great fuss over them! This might be to do

Heather Goodship-Patience
Spokes Member, Canterbury

Sunday 5th September saw the annual Skyride come to London. Over the years it's had many names but now under the sponsorship of Sky the Skyride sees 15km of central London streets closed to traffic for the day to allow cyclists of all ages and abilities to explore central London hassle free. The course stretched from the Tower of London all along the Embankment, round Parliament Square, up the Mall past Buckingham Palace before culminating in St. James Park which was alive with the various entertainment acts, stands and food stalls. It was also the place to go to pick up a free Skyride high vis vest which was the fashion for the day. It is estimated over 85,000 cyclists took to the streets this year for Skyride packing out the newly extended route. Lets hope they extend it again next year and pack it with even more cyclists.

London Skyride

SPOKES

East Kent Cycle Campaign

ISSUE 62 WINTER 2010

www.spokeseastkent.org.uk



One of the many Boris Bike pick up and dropping stations on the Great Dover Road, near the Borough Market off London Bridge. Boris Rental Bicycle Scheme after only a short time in operation is an undisputed success! Londoners and visitors of all shapes and sizes have taken to these sturdy machines and can be seen whizzing about in droves over the city.

SPOKES was formed in 1994 to campaign for better cycling facilities in East Kent. SPOKES works closely with Sustrans, Kent County Council, district and parish councils. SPOKES is affiliated to the Cyclists' Touring Club, the Cycle Campaign Network and Euro-Regio



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SPOKES RIDES & EVENTS

(Further rides on the website)

Co-ordinator: Ian Rogers Tel: 749598 Email: rides@spokeseastkent.org.uk

SPOKES always welcomes non-members on its rides, but do consider joining! All SPOKES rides are suitable for families unless otherwise noted. Rides in **BOLD** are SPOKES Rides.

Sunday 2nd Jan - Lord Whisky Tearooms

Burn off that Xmas pud with a steady climb up the North Downs for a light lunch near Stelling Minnis. Downhill all the way back!
Meet 11.00 Canterbury West station. Contact Greg Williams 01227 761736.

Sunday 6th Feb - South of North

Skirting the southern edge of the North Downs towards Lyminge. No big hills.
Meet 10.30 Wye station. Contact Ian Rogers 01227 749598.

Sunday 6th March - Black and White

From coal mines to White Cliffs. Lovely sea views near Dover and Deal.

Meet 10.30 Shepherdswell station. Contact Ian Rogers 01227 749598.

Saturday 2nd April - France

A gentle ride along the canals to Ardres.
Meet at 8 am at Dover Eastern Docks. Contact Steve Fawke on 01227 830336.

Sunday 1st May - Forests and hills

Exploring the beautiful countryside south of Canterbury.
Meet 10.30 Canterbury East station. Contact tbd.

Cycling England axed

In mid October it was confirmed that Cycling England is to be axed by the end of March 2011. Amongst other things the quango supplies the funding for the national cycle training, Bikeability, as well as the money towards the cycling demonstration towns.

#62

SPOKES, PO Box 991 Canterbury CT1 9EL.

Please make cheques payable to SPOKES and send to

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Individual adult £7.50 Family/household £12

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Editorial

The main excitement recently has been the completion (a few minor things still need doing) of the Canterbury to Chartham Cycle Route. There is to be an official opening of the route in early spring 2011. Many Spokies have already ridden the route and they have reported not only seeing lots of cyclists using it but walkers as well.

Boris Bikes are also making the headlines. It is not just in London and Paris that these bicycle rental schemes exist but also in such places as Calais and Lille. If Calais can do it why not Canterbury, Dover, Ashford and Whitstable?

Chairman's Ramblings

Firstly let me say Happy Christmas and a very happy prosperous New Year. This newsletter will be with you post AGM and sadly not being a soothsayer I'm unable to give you any feedback from our annual get together. What I can say however is that we shall be celebrating the completion of the Canterbury to Chartham Cycle route at the AGM. At the time of writing it has been agreed that we make a financial contribution towards a table, seating and cycle parking similar to that found at the Winding Pond on the Crab and Winkle. Spokes will be participating in the official grand opening next year along with the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership, Sustrans, Canterbury City Council and KCC.

We face a lot of challenges in the coming year, with funding for cycle routes and shared use path being dramatically cut. Sadly the same cannot be said for park and ride schemes, slip roads and other car related projects which only exacerbate and promote car use. When you meet your prospective councillor in the run up to the local elections, start asking questions because we will be in the coming months. Councils and councillors need to stop pampering to the needs of the motoring lobby before it's too late.

Steve Fawke

It's like riding a bike!

That's what we say about something we'll never forget. And it's quite true. Once we have learnt to ride a bike our brains will remember. It's down to our molecular layer interneurons... apparently!

It is great when you get a chance to re-introduce someone to cycling. Even after a break of more than fifty years, it only takes a few minutes to get riding again.

But some people never learn to ride a bike. As a cycling instructor, one of the greatest joys is to help people to learn to ride a bicycle for the very first time.

As we get older we build up fear barriers, so the challenge is to persuade new cyclists to break down those barriers. Consequently teaching someone to ride a bike later in life is a gentle, careful activity where we progress in baby steps. It's about boosting confidence – also known as “Gok Wan-ing” – and convincing the brain, those molecular layer interneurons that it is perfectly safe to balance on two wheels.

So if someone you know is planning to make a New Year's resolution to learn to ride a bike, encourage them. Support them. Help them. It's never too late and it just might be life changing. And you only have to learn once, because you never forget how to ride a bike!

Adrian Oliver



Picture by Spokie Ben Knox of the Chartham to Canterbury route leading away from the bridge at Toddler's Cove

Boris Bikes

Even if the Mayor of London cannot take total credit for London's cycle scheme, I have to say that I have been pleased with the 'Boris Bikes'. Having joined the plethora of the converted at a snip at £45 per year – with no extra cost for all rides under half an hour, I have worked out that the *Barclays Cycle Hire* scheme costs 12p a day. Or, if you only cycle once a week – 84p per journey. So, from the perspective of a user, what a bargain! Getting around the centre of capital is faster by bike. Having recently arrived in London as an émigré from East Kent, I have rapidly realised that London Underground is the most inefficient transport method. The bus is adequate but you spend most of time in traffic jams. So, as an LSE student who has a Brompton folding bike in London, it would seem odd to choose the bike scheme over using my Brompton, a folding bike proudly *Made in England*. Yet, what the cycle scheme has allowed is the ability to cycle around central London without worrying whether your bike gets nicked. It also gives you the freedom to not cycle back, or visit friends after leaving the library in the small hours. Now, to the public service element... Given the perpetual whinging you get from non-cyclists who would much rather be cooped up on the Tube in the utopian land of signal failures, it has been good to see some of those now switching to the feared self-propelled bicycle. What was so delightful was to see those working in the Royal Courts of Justice jump on the bikes after work (unlike the bus it has no snobbery). Comrades, unite! No longer are cyclists in London the preserve of fluorescent lycra swarms of weather beaten victims suffering from years in the elements. Victory will be declared when we see a judge in a full-bottomed wig whipping down Fleet Street. Indeed, a friend of mine who had never learnt to cycle and insists on wearing tweed (he's 22), succeeded in joining the cycling contingent two weeks ago. Whether or not he ran people off the path in his courageous application of brakes around Hyde Park is another matter, but what he demonstrated is that bike scheme's societal benefits. For a negligible cost, it has enabled non-cyclists to see what cycling is like on good quality machines; a trial run as it were. As the academics *Thaler* and *Sunstein* would argue, *Boris Bikes* are nudging commuters and others into a more sustainable form of travel. But, where's the detail, I hear you cry? The bikes have so far been of good quality; they have flashing LEDs on both ends run by hub dynamos with a residual battery for stops. All the wiring is kept within the frame, and there are powerful hub brakes. With three speed hub gears, it is sufficient for cycling around the reasonably flat Central London, but the highest gear has seemingly been kept deliberately low to keep speed down. Given the novel approach to cycling taken by my friend, this was probably a good idea – it is still sufficient to cycle around at a reasonable pace. As for the seat-post, it is easily adjustable and at full extension is just right for my stature; I am 6 feet 3 and my toes can barely touch the ground. With a chain-guard, you don't get your trousers caught and the chain hasn't yet come off. It's slightly heavier than a normal bike and only has a front rack forming a slot with the handlebars, but unless you are planning go camping during your ride, its all-inclusive bungee is adequate. Once the two-wheeled derision for those who believe that you are not proper cyclist has dissipated, which turns out to be more paranoia than reality, there is a cabal of *Boris Biking Commuters* there to race against. (NB. Derision for fair-weather consumers of the scheme is retained - They don't dare cycle in sleet, snow, storms, or rain.) With plenty of slots, albeit sometimes empty at two a.m. and at peak times, I recommend the scheme to fellow cycling gentry of East Kent and to all those uninitiated to the delights of cycling. It is by far the best way to investigate central London.

Sam Shirley

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Website developments

In addition to the Spokes blog, which we launched in February, there have been a number of other additions made to the Spokes website recently:

- ◆ A Frequently Asked Questions section has been added. If you've got a question that you think we should add, please the webmaster know.
- ◆ There are now pages to browse content by district/borough. This'll show the relevant blog postings, cycle forum (where applicable), proposed future cycle routes, cycle maps, and station cycle parking details for the chosen district/borough.
- ◆ Spokes membership can now be paid for online by using PayPal.

We hope you like the additions.

Cycling online

In our Summer 2010 issue we noted the excellent cycle journey planning website originally started by Cambridge Cycling Campaign, *CycleStreets.net*. Since then some free iPhone Apps have been released to bring cycle journey planning to your phone (Note, however, that they do require a data connection to the Internet). There's **Bike Hub**, which provides journey planning powered by

CycleStreets together with details of cycling shops, events, and general background cycling information. *CycleStreets* have their own iPhone App, unsurprisingly called **CycleStreets** which combines their own journey planner with the Photomap facility that shows photos relevant to cycling (such as what the cycle parking is like in the area, or what a route looks like). New photos can be submitted using the app. Campaign iPhone App **iPayRoadTax** will give you the latest cycling news as well as dispel the myths around road tax (hint: it doesn't exist; it was abolished by 1937. Vehicle Excise Duty is now paid by motorists related to their vehicle's emissions). The **Cycle Hire** and **London Cycle** iPhone Apps are useful if you're looking for a London Cycle Hire (aka Boris Bikes) hire point when in central London. The former will even tell you how many bikes and free cycle parking spaces are currently at each hire point, such that you're not disappointed when you get there. The **FixMyStreet** iPhone App allows you to report issues, such as potholes, problems with cycle paths, or littering directly from your phone. You can take a photo of the issue which'll be associated with your current location and sent straight to the appropriate authority to be fixed. The CTC's **Fill That Hole** iPhone App provides similar pothole reporting functionality to their website www.fillthathole.org.uk.

Cycle route developments

Since the Autumn newsletter there's been quite a bit of progress in cycle route creation: Cycle signs have been installed on the Oyster Bay Trail. The Canterbury to Chartham riverside cycle route is nearing completion (it may even be fully complete by the time you read this). A small amount of construction work has been completed for the River Dour Greenway cycle route in Dover. We've been informed that construction has started on the Queenborough Lines cycle route in Sheppey.

LTP3 consultation out

A draft version of Kent County Council's Local Transport Plan 3, which affects transport between 2011 and 2016 is currently under consultation. Details, including details of how to respond to the consultation, can be found at www.kent.gov.uk/LTP3.

Canterbury West cycle parking

I've just gone by Canterbury West. There's lots of new cycle parking installed (space for another 60 bicycles), though it can't quite be accessed yet. For a photograph and location map, go to <http://www.cyclestreets.net/location/27074/>

Gregory Williams