



CycleReading

WORKING FOR A CYCLE FRIENDLY READING

www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

Autumn 2011 No 114

Thames Path No Cycling Update



Contents

- 1 Thames Path No Cycling Update
- 2 Campaign News
- 3 Other Cycling News
- 4 Letters to the Editor
- 5 Chairman's Letter
- 7 Highway Design
- 8 Good Vibrations
- 10 Estuary to Estuary
- 12 Contact Us
- Campaign Diary

The controversial 'No Cycling' signs erected by Reading Borough Council along the Thames Towpath between Reading Bridge and Caversham Bridge have now been taken down. This came about after RBC admitted that the signs had no legal standing, since the towpath is not subject to regulations that apply to the public highway.

The signs have been replaced by a series of three chicanes aimed at discouraging cyclists racing along the path. We have pointed out to

the Council that these are an inconvenience to wheelchair users and parents with pushchairs, and are likely to cause as much conflict due to creating 'pinch points' as they reduce by limiting speeding.

For our part, the moral high ground includes promoting responsible cycling on shared facilities, so please encourage any cyclists you know who use the towpath to cycle with due consideration for pedestrians.

Campaign News



Reading Borough Council (RBC)

RBC and RCC - A New Way of Working?

The quarterly Cycle Liaison Group (comprising cycling stakeholder groups, RBC Council Officers and RBC Councillors) met on the evening of 29 September, nearly eight months since the last meeting. Consequently there was a full bag of issues to be aired in the allotted time.

The Cycle Liaison Group is constrained by the limited discussion time available to allow the cycle stakeholder groups to get meaningful input for specific issues. It was therefore proposed by Councillors that, where required, specific issues be dealt with by *ad-hoc* workshops convened in addition to the regular Cycle Liaison Group. Matters that have been flagged for workshop discussion include a review of the recent town centre one-way changes and plans for implementing the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF) Award (see next article).

Of course workshops are not a new invention - over the years we have had

a number of workshops with RBC on issues as diverse as plans for a one-way IDR and methods to tackle cycle theft. Over the last 12 months the Council has proposed a number of workshops with Cycle Groups: cycle links over Reading Bridge, Oxford Road Area Study, Reading Station and cycle parking. The common thread that runs through this list of proposed workshops is that none of them actually happened over the 12 month period.

Proposals for workshops are fine; the missing ingredient that needs to be added is a commitment to follow through. However, the first workshop on ideas for improving the cycle network using funding from the LSTF took place on 16 November.

LSFT Award

Local Authority Transport departments often rely on Central Government cash to fund transport schemes that cannot be delivered through their own 'regular' transport budget. Local Authorities bid for scheme funding against criteria set by government. Over recent years these Central Government goalposts have kept changing, frustrating the ongoing efforts of Councils to secure funding for transport schemes.

RBC has now managed to scoop a £4.9m award from the LSFT. As the name suggests this money will be used for schemes to encourage sustainable

transport choices. RBC's plans for this award include: a pilot cycle hire scheme concentrating on the University area, auditing and improving cycle routes, extension of the existing personalised travel planning project and active travel interventions to overcome barriers to choosing sustainable transport.

An initial workshop took place on 16 November with RBC and the local cycling groups (RCC, CTC, Sustrans, GREN). The workshop looked at the south-east quadrant of Reading and identified a host of potential infrastructure improvements ranging from sub-standard shared-use cycle paths on London Road to lack of cycle parking at Cemetery Junction shops. RBC and its consultants will now rationalise the first flush of ideas to produce a priority list for implementation through the LSTF. The next LSTF workshop will look at the north Reading area.

A second larger Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid for £24m is being made by Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire Councils and will be considered by the Department for Transport in December. If successful, this larger bid is planned to fund a new cycle/pedestrian bridge over the Thames in central Reading.

Keith Elliott
RBC Campaigner



PHILIP CHAPPLE
MICPP



REMEDIAL AND SPORTS MASSAGE

0118 926 3620
philip@pchapple64.freemove.co.uk
www.earley-therapy.co.uk



The TRADITIONAL RESTORATION COMPANY Ltd

Specialists in Restoration of Fine Antique Furniture

Audrey Thompson

The Coach House
Dorney Court
Dorney
Windsor
Berkshire SL4 6QP
Tel: 01628 660708 (office)
0118 986 2444 (home)




Other Cycling News

Can you Help Buy Ben a New Trike?

Parents of a severely disabled 10-year-old boy are appealing for help to buy him a specially adapted tricycle.

Ben Cook, who has difficulty walking, used to love the freedom his bike gave him. But the pupil, who goes to Brookfields School in Tilehurst, has grown too big for it and it will cost nearly £2,000 to buy a replacement.

Parents Simon and Alison Cook have written to nearly 30 organisations asking for help but so far only two, Lions clubs and Reading Round Table, have been able to pledge any support.

Now, the family, who live off Knowsley Road, Tilehurst, are appealing for any other organisations or businesses to come forward to make up the rest.

Mrs Cook said: "Ben can't use a normal bike so we have had to get a specialist trike made which is unique and at quite a large expense. It's not an off-the-shelf bike, it's made to suit the child."

Ben suffers a chromosome abnormality which means he has a mental age of three, is deaf and cannot speak. He was also born with club feet and so has difficulty walking.

Mrs Cook says Ben is very sociable and playing on his trike is one of his biggest joys.

She said: "It's something he really enjoys doing. He loves being outside, it gives him a sense of freedom."

Any organisation, business or individual who would like to help out should email Dave Ebsworth at Reading Lions at dave.ebsworth@btinternet.com

http://www.getreading.co.uk/news/s/2101643_can_you_help_buy_ben_a_new_bike (3/11/11)

Vince Cable Says Cycling is a 'Humdrum' Industry

At the opening of Innovate 2011 in London, an Expo organised by the Technology Strategy Board quango, Vince Cable, the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills and

president of the Board of Trade, gave a keynote speech.

"This event provides a clear demonstration of the talent and the creativity we have in this country," he said.

He praised pharmaceutical companies and offshore engineering manufacturers but cherry-picked a bicycle maker:

"My favourite example is Brompton Bikes in Brentford - a world-beating bicycle maker which stays ahead of its low-cost competitors through creative innovation."

Great stuff for Brompton, but prior to this praise, Cable said Brompton was part of "what might be seen as humdrum industries."

Later in his speech Cable announced more cash handouts for the car industry.

He said: "The UK car industry can, and should be, at the forefront of innovation, which is why, in the New Year, we're making an additional investment of up to £15 million in projects to accelerate the commercialisation of low-carbon [motor] vehicles."

<http://www.bikebiz.com/news/read/business-secretary-says-brompton-is-part-of-a-humdrum-industry> (3/11/11)

Manchester Pupils on Track with New Train Card for Cyclists

Pupil power has seen a rail company introduce a new pass scheme - after young cyclists complained about being kicked off trains.

Students at a Hale Barns school complained to Northern Rail after they were asked to leave the busy trains with their bikes to make way for other passengers.

The company has now introduced new cards which give St Ambrose pupils travelling to and from Knutsford and Hale priority.

Ciaran Grieves, 13, said pupils faced long delays in getting to school.

He said: "One morning we were left waiting on the platform for an hour and a half as the conductor simply

refused to let us get on with our bikes."

Northern Rail conductor manager, Rob Edwards, said the scheme was a first for the company.

He said: "We were horrified by the children's account and have therefore introduced a new card scheme to make life easier for both the young cyclists and the conductors.

"It gives them priority and also means we can contact parents if trains are going to be late.

"It's the first scheme of its kind and we hope to sign up as many cyclists as possible."

http://menmedia.co.uk/manchester-eveningnews/news/s/1463781_pupils-on-track-with-new-train-cards-for-young-cyclists (3/11/11)

Updating our Records

If any of your details have changed, please let us know.

For example, people sometimes forget to inform relevant organisations when they change or get a new e-mail address.

Our newsletters are delivered to the street address we were last told about. Use this form to advise us of any changed details:

Old Name: _____

Revised Name: _____

Old Address: _____

New Address: _____

Old E-mail: _____

New E-mail: _____

Send this completed form to:

Membership Secretary, 26 Barrington Way, Reading RG1 6EG

Data Protection Act: RCC keeps membership records on computer. This information is not disclosed to third parties.

Letters to the Editor

Local cyclist Gareth Epps replies to the Reading Campaign News from our Spring edition.

Dear Sir,

I read Keith Elliott's summary of the effects of Reading Borough Council's closure of Station Hill with interest and not a little disbelief.

When I cycle to the station most mornings, as a recently returning cyclist I am massively put off. It may be that the changes are of some benefit to those going to and from the west, but the same certainly isn't true from the east.

My route round the side of the Forbury is now blocked at Valpy Street, where I'm met by unnecessary 'No Entry' signs, and forced to cross a busy bus route, with my line of sight blocked by parked buses. I am then sent down the short cycle lane past the Rising Sun and Corn Stores, along a rutted

surface with speed humps, new bus stops, and all manner of confusing traffic.

It is far safer to ride illegally down Valpy Street and Blagrove Street, not, of course, that RBC's Transport department would listen to a mere cyclist!

The changes by the front of the station make even less sense. Pedestrians now wander dangerously across the road as safe crossings have been removed, taxis are parked wherever they can get away with it, and there's no logical or safe point for cyclists to disembark.

The turning off the closed-off point in Station Hill ends the life of one of the most short-lived (and daftest) cycle lanes, a white line leading directly onto the pavement, but it means that people leaving the station on their bike are now cut off by none-too-friendly black cab drivers.

I've made my views on the closure of Station Hill well-known, but Reading Cycle Campaign now needs to shout hard at the mess that has been caused, and the almost total lack of thought given to cyclists under the new arrangements.

Incidentally at least one of the quick win, the Toucan crossing at Craven Road/London Road, was supported by RBC's Access Forum earlier this year when the road layout was changed - but it was still ignored by RBC.

Gareth Epps

St John's Road, Reading.

We welcome letters to the newsletter. If you would like to comment on cycling in Reading or anything in the newsletter, feel free to email newsletter@readingcyclecampaign.org or visit our Facebook page on www.facebook.com/ReadingCycleCampaign.



We have been helping accident victims for well over 30 years and have developed a National reputation for our work in this field.

Specialising in a wide range of injury work for both adults and children, the firm has membership of all the relevant specialist panels including those of the Law Society, Headway and the Spinal Injuries Association and is closely involved with the Bicycle Helmet Initiative Trust (BHIT) based in Reading.

Once again my sincere thanks for your kind assistance and courtesy in dealing with this claim and bringing it to a successful conclusion.

Jean Crown, Kent



We have our own brain injury support group, an in-house case manager and the experience and commitment to ensure that you and your loved ones get the result and support that you need.

Based in Reading, we represent clients nationally and operate a guaranteed no win no fee no deductions policy.

We hope it never happens to you, but if you do have an accident call

Kim Smerdon or Julia Appleton

Freephone 0800 884 0719 email advice@claims-personalinjury.com

www.boyesturnerclaima.com

Chairman's Letter

Dear RCC members,

Speaking to people who don't cycle it is clear that many have stacked up a list of reasons why they don't.

It reminds of my one time boss, who had a problem with his spine. I had had a similar problem and was told to do a bit of swimming. I love swimming, so off I went to the pool, and did my daily lengths. The back problem is banished for the time being, but I have to get in the pool pretty regularly. I suggested to him that he might benefit. He clearly wasn't a fan of swimming and immediately trotted out a list of reasons why he didn't want to go. He is the director of a cycling organisation, and it made me laugh that he was using the exact same type of argument that so many people use to avoid cycling. People are very resistant to change; too many are dependent on cars for even the shortest journeys.

With all the decent cycle lanes in the world, if people don't want to cycle they won't. So to look at ways of making people want to cycle we had a very successful inaugural Cycling Forum back in September.

33 people from most sectors of the community that cycle were there, and we made a lot of progress. It was actually quite inspiring, and we plan many more forums on a range of subjects in the coming months.

We all know, those reading this, that cycling is a very good thing. It is very good for our health, amazing at building a strong heart and lungs, great for keeping weight in check, and good at relieving stress. Therefore it relieves pressure on the health services; doctors see cyclists less often than non-cyclists!

It is good for the economy. Cyclists work harder, for longer and are off work less. Not many of them stand outside offices having cigarette breaks!

They don't need much spending on decent infrastructure, compared to the mindboggling resources needed to cater for cars, lorries and buses. They don't contribute much to global warming, and are very low carbon.

It is good socially as cyclists are happier; the exercise induced endorphins are one thing, but cyclists form a community too. Perhaps it is being part of an oppressed minority, but there is a great degree of cyclists looking out for one another, not too apparent among our motoring chums!

So to encourage more people to cycle would be a win win situation. What is a surprise though is that we have to actually campaign for even half decent facilities. You would have thought with all the benefits that cycling brings, investment in good facilities would be taken for granted. Then once the environment was right ("Build it and they will come") we could all focus on encouraging people to ride their bikes.

It comes as no surprise of course that that is a naïve view. There is still much hostility and ignorance towards

CTC Affiliated Membership

As a member of RCC, did you know you can apply for CTC affiliated membership? Listed below are the benefits:

- 3rd party insurance cover of £5,000,000 anywhere in the world except USA and Canada
- a CTC membership card and the CTC Member benefits giving access to a wide range of discounts and benefits; details available from the website www.ctc.org.uk
- the weekly CTC email news-letter 'Newsnet'

Please note that these benefits apply only as long as you remain a fully paid-up member of RCC.

The cost of the CTC affiliated membership is £16 for a full year.

For more details contact the Membership Secretary on 0118 939 4044

YES, I WANT TO JOIN RCC!

Name: Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms (please delete)

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Email

- ☐ I would like details of how I can help with Campaign activities
- ☐ I am a member of the Cyclists' Touring Club

Signed

Date

How did you hear about the Campaign?

- ☐ Individual membership (annual) £3
- ☐ Joint membership (annual) £5
(Two or more living at the same address)
No. of people under joint membership.....
- ☐ Unwaged/unior membership (annual) £1
- ☐ Life membership £35
- ☐ I would like to make future payments by standing order. Please send me details.

I enclose a cheque for £..... covering my membership and a donation* of £.....
*An additional donation to help fund our activities would be very much appreciated

Please make cheques payable to **Reading Cycle Campaign** and send together with the completed form to: **Membership Secretary, Reading Cycle Campaign, 26 Barrington Way, Reading RG1 6EG**

Data Protection Act: Reading Cycle Campaign keeps membership records on computer. This information is not disclosed to third parties.

Our Mission



- To campaign for better facilities for cyclists in Reading, in particular a network of safe cycleways linking residential, industrial and commercial areas, and giving access to the town centre.
- To work with Sustrans, the Cyclists' Touring Club (both locally and nationally) and others interested in promoting cycling and the well-being of cyclists.
- To identify the needs of cyclists in Reading, for example the location of safe and secure parking, and to campaign for their provision.
- To work with and advise local authorities and, where necessary, criticise and highlight their shortcomings.

Chairman's Letter

cyclists, and towards cycling. Of course that hostility is towards people who have yet to get on a bike too, so don't feel especially singled out if you ride.

It is perhaps that cycling is free, so we cyclists are unencumbered by fuel costs, ticket prices, even the rules, that leads non-cyclists to feel threatened.

It is by and large non-cyclists who make the decisions that influence how resources are allocated, and of course spending those resources to make the world much better for cyclists threatens their position too.

I was amazed the other evening to see our decision making Councillors arriving at the Civic Centre for a meeting. I was coming home on my bike when I bumped into an old colleague, and we stood chatting on the concourse outside the Council offices. One by one sharply dressed Councillors trotted up the steps from the Councillors' car park. I didn't see any of them arrive on foot or by bike, although I do know one or two do walk and travel by bus.

As I left and cycled up Castle Street, one Councillor, obviously late for a meeting, screeched away from the lights in his big executive car and zoomed along Castle Street towards the car park.

I suppose he was delayed by traffic, all those cars clogging up our roads and getting in his way.

If you were to see that as being, if not normal, at least fairly common, and something that our good upstanding Councillors indulge in, then it is little wonder that cycling is seen as something unattractive to the current non-cyclist.

When they come to decide how the money is spent it is the reduction in congestion they appreciate. It is the voters, especially the car drivers and the big cheeses who run our big businesses and corporations, who all want cars to be able to get in and out of town, to fill the car parks, to fill their boots with shopping.

The manner of his driving though was actually quite alarming. I am sure that inside his car he was fully in control, but from the outside, watching a couple of tonnes of metal driven quickly in a busy town centre was a bit unnerving. I wouldn't want to be cycling if all car drivers drove like that.

The other problem is that the things that would make life for cyclists easier are often small, simple but well planned changes. Few people who are still working in our local authority want to do such things; they want to have the big landmark project on



their CVs for when they have to look for another job.

The humble cyclist doesn't really warrant encouraging; a shift from driving is only wanted if the drivers and passengers are to get into the Council run buses.

It is a sad indictment that the free and easy cyclist, who could be part of the solution, is seen as part of the problem.

Adrian Lawson
Chairman

ACTION BIKES

THE BIGGEST BIKE DEALER IN THE UK
• Massive choice of bikes & accessories in stock • Fully equipped workshops for your urgent top quality repairs
• Order by phone • We deliver

• GIANT • SCOTT • SARACEN • TP
• MONGOOSE • FALCON/CLAUDBUTLER

**15 WEST STREET
READING
BERKS**

0118 951 1345

**SAME DAY BIKE REPAIRS
SPARES • ACCESSORIES**



working for cycling

**Reading Cyclists' Touring
Club presents**

Local bike rides for all

We organise rides to suit all tastes every Tuesday and Sunday and on summer Wednesday evenings. Just turn up!

For more details call

0118 986 2763

or www.readingctc.co.uk

Highway Design

Some Facts and Myths

Two years ago the Woodley Community Partnership asked me to write a report on cycling, so I did some research on the Department for Transport's website. The guidance seems to be in limbo at present, with all the material created during the time of the last government 'archived'. I presume this means what I found there should still be followed until it's replaced.

From *A Sustainable Future for Cycling*: "International comparisons show that there is real scope for increasing cycle use for some trips. Preston (2%) is typical of the British average. The achievements of Basel and Freiburg (20%) indicate that there is clearly potential to increase cycling further."

I recently visited Germany and saw how many elderly people do indeed cycle, and without feeling any need for a helmet or high visibility clothing. The speed limit in towns is always 19mph, unless good separate facilities for cyclists have been provided. To see all the Mercedes and BMWs being driven slowly and considerably amazed me.

From *Local Transport Note 1/04 - Policy, Planning and Design for Walking and Cycling*: "Five core principles have been established: Connectivity,

Conspicuity, Convenience, Comfort, and Conviviality. New facilities should usually offer an advantage in terms of directness and/or reduced delay compared with existing provision.

"There should be proper provision for crossing busy roads and other barriers in urban and rural areas, and in some areas there should be a positive advantage over private motorised traffic.

"The potential for conflict between pedestrians and cyclists should be minimised. The surfaces, landscaping and street furniture must be well-maintained and regularly cleaned.

"The concept of a hierarchy of users has been established. This places pedestrians at the top, followed by cyclists then public transport, with unaccompanied private car-users last. The objective of such a hierarchy is to ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable road users are fully considered in all highway schemes, but not necessarily to give priority to pedestrians and cyclists in every location.

"The appropriate measures should generally follow a preferred hierarchy; consider first traffic reduction, then speed reduction, then cycle lanes, segregated cycle tracks constructed by reallocation of carriageway space, cycle tracks away from roads. Consider

last conversion of footways/footpaths to unsegregated shared-use cycle tracks alongside the carriageway.

"It is important that each option is considered thoroughly before resorting to any measure further down the hierarchy. The introduction of sub-standard measures should be discouraged."

So why do our local authorities say they find it so tempting to introduce sub-standard measures for cyclists and pedestrians?

"Parents support them for learner cyclists": I think we should reply that they've consulted motorist parents instead of cyclists! We see few learner cyclists using shared pavements on busy roads, but we see many cyclists not using them because they're slower and more dangerous. They also encourage illegal cycling on other pavements, and they encourage some motorists to think that cyclists shouldn't be on the carriageway at all.

"Circular 01/06 only allows us to introduce 20 mph limits where speeds are already below 24 mph and they must be self-policing. The emergency services object to traffic calming measures and without these, lower speed limits are of little value": Let's reply that shared pavements are of no value at all, and they're not self-policing either. They make cyclists liable for any accident, however careless other road users are. On the other hand if someone is seriously injured on a road with a 20mph limit it will usually be quite clear if the incident was caused by a speeding driver or a careless vulnerable user.

"We have to provide for all road users" they reply. Hear Hear! So the first thing our local Councils should do is decommission at least half of the shared pavements they've created. Then we can join with pedestrians and wheelchair users, and start talking to them about more 20 mph speed limits. These would only add a minute to a typical urban car journey, but they would transform the lives of children, the disabled and the elderly.

Peter Glass



Got any comments, feedback, points of view or experiences to share with RCC readers?

Then write a letter to the Editor, and it will be printed in the next issue.

We look forward to receiving them!

newsletter@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

Good Vibrations

Crossing Europe on a Bike Called Reggie

Local teacher and cyclist Andrew Sykes writes about his grand cycle ride across Europe to the coast of the Adriatic.

I live in Reading and teach in Henley. It's why I cycle there every morning and explains why I do so very early in the morning and very late in the afternoon. We teachers work long hours! But there is a big compensation. It is, of course, the holidays. In summer 2008 however, for whatever reason, I had decided not to make the most of my six weeks of freedom from the interactive whiteboard and in early August found myself spending much time watching the cyclists at the Beijing Olympics. It was a very wet day when Nicole Cooke won the gold medal in the women's cycle race, but the rain didn't dampen my envy of her being in some far off place doing some exciting cycling. Certainly exciting compared to my genteel rush hour journey across the corner of Oxfordshire. It got me thinking. I really should do something exciting on a bike.

It wasn't long before I had come up with the idea of a long-distance cycle from Reading to Brindisi in the south of Italy. I had a friend who spent his summers in the beautiful region of

Puglia, just fifty kilometres from the Adriatic port, and it certainly ticked the box of being a little adventure. Although not quite in the Mark Beaumont Premier League of cycling, it was perhaps a contender for the League One title. I was comfortable with that. I kept my plan very quiet, but in July 2010 I was ready. Well, not quite ready. I had planned the first few days of the cycle and I reckoned that it would probably take me around five weeks to get from the south of England to the south of Italy, but my trip planning lacked one important thing: detail. Not to worry, I thought, I'll just live by my wits and make it up as I go along. Via my website I had made contact with fellow cyclists in Kent, the Pas de Calais, Milan, Rome and Benevento so I would see some friendly faces along the way but most of it would be done on the hoof. On Sunday 18 July 2010, I set off. If you were up early, you would have seen me pedal my way out of town and along the A4 *en route* for Brindisi.

I did at least have a route to follow, or rather two routes to follow. The first was the route of the pilgrimage path from Canterbury to Rome, the Via Francigena. This is a very direct route that cuts through eastern France, over the Alps at the St Bernard's Pass and then continues south over the



Apennines, through Tuscany and then to Rome. I would certainly use this as a guide once I had cycled over the Alps but another route, the Eurovelo 5, would be leading me initially along the Franco-Belgian border to Luxembourg, up the Rhine and then across Switzerland. South of Rome the Eurovelo 5 would once again take up the reins of guiding me all the way to Brindisi. But neither route answered all my initial hopes of providing me with a detailed set of directions to get from A to B or in my case, Reading to

awcycles

Reading's Performance Cycle Centre

bikes parts clothing accessories

Friendly, expert staff to cater for every type of rider - from a toddlers first trike to a pro-level custom built race machine

0118 946 3050 awcycles.co.uk

110 Henley Road, Caversham, RG4 6DH

Reading Cycle Campaign offer on breakdown cover

Call 0800 212 810
 Quoting ref: S576

Established 10 years ago as an alternative to the AA and RAC, the ETA offers a wide range of services to its members at extremely competitive prices, including a unique cycle rescue service. The ETA actively campaigns for a sustainable transport system for Britain.

**The motoring organisation that
won't cost the earth**

www.eta.co.uk

The ETA has moved to new offices:
 68 High Street, Weybridge KT 13 8RS
 Tel 01932 828 882 Fax 01932 829 015 Email eta@eta.co.uk

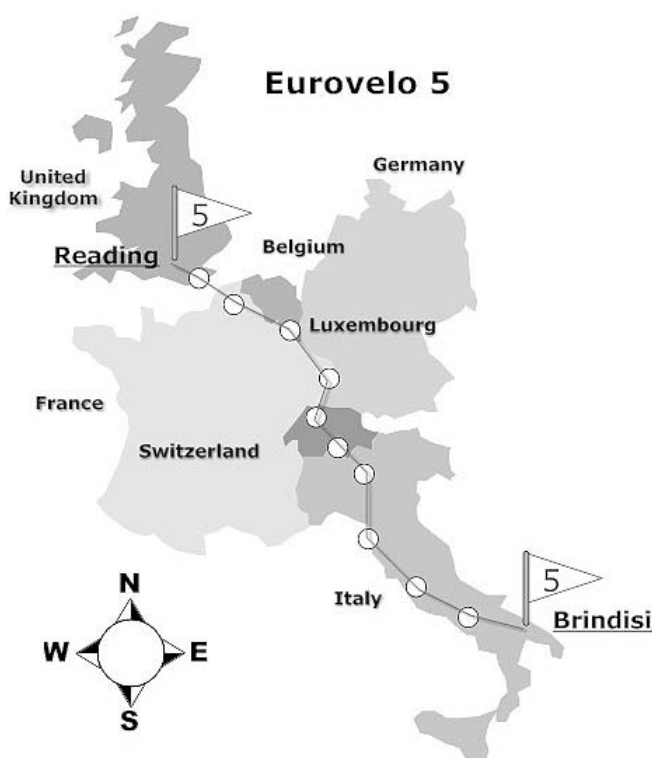
Good Vibrations

Brindisi. The Via Francigena is primarily a walking route and on a bike, I wouldn't be able to follow it over the stiles, through the fields and over the mountains of Europe. As for the Eurovelo 5, it was very much a work-in-progress. Someone at the European Cyclists' Federation in Brussels had decided where the dots would be but no one had yet joined them up definitively.

So the day-to-day cycling was very much up to me. Within 72 hours of leaving Berkshire, I was in a small community hall near Boulogne-sur-mer in northern France ballroom dancing. Yes, you did read that right. Ballroom dancing. It's a long story and was a sign of things to come as I headed gradually further and further south. It was just a pity that the rainy English summer weather was heading in the same direction as I was. Northern France was showery and blustery, Eastern France along the Rhine Cycle Route was less blustery but by no means less rainy.

cycling was looking down upon me as I made my way over the cobbles and up to the pass. For one fleeting day, blue skies abounded and I enjoyed my much cherished views looking north and south across and down the Alpine valleys of Switzerland.

The rain kicked in again as soon as I descended from the mountain but my mind was distracted by other issues; spokes. They started breaking with alarming regularity and it made for some stressful



And when I arrived in Switzerland, I was welcomed with a wall of water. The locals told me it was the worst summer on record. Cowering in my tent in Lucerne I did wonder whether, when I reached the physical and hopefully spiritual high point of the Gotthard Pass as I crossed the Alps, I would actually be afforded any kind of view through the clouds and be able to look north and feast upon my achievement so far or indeed look south and glimpse what was yet to come. However, the patron saint of

albeit ultimately eventful and satisfying days trying to get them mended. In Italy the rain abated but only to let the mosquitoes take its place. My troubles were eased somewhat by the hospitality and warmth of the Italians, who never quite lived

up to their fearsome reputation as mad motorists. Simone, my contact near Milan, was gushing in his welcome; he even moved himself and his girlfriend out of their one-bedroom flat in Pavia so that I had a comfortable bed upon which to lay my weary muscles.

In Siena, I managed to arrive at the very start of one of the two Palio. This is the bare-back horse race that sees daredevil locals put their lives at risk for the honour of their local community. It is a festival of colour, smells, action

and atmosphere. A memorable moment *en route*. Rome was an oasis of laid back southern European life where I spent a day off meandering the streets on foot before once again saddling up for the final push towards Brindisi on the Adriatic coast. There was a distinct change south of the capital; increasingly dusty and sultry I spent many excessively long days pedalling across what at times resembled a desert. But on Monday 23 August I finally arrived and was able to park Reggie (my bike, of course) at the end of the long harbour wall in Brindisi, where there was no more road upon which to travel. We had made it. To go any further would have involved donning a pair of Speedos and swimming. Perhaps next time, I will.

Andrew Sykes

Andrew has written a book about his journey; Good Vibrations: Crossing Europe on a Bike Called Reggie. It's currently available as an eBook and you can find out more about Andrew's adventures and plans for his next big trip on his website: CyclingEurope.org

Estuary to Estuary

An inspired cycle ride for amateurs!

If you don't fancy pedalling all the way to Italy, RCC members Kay and John Oakley tell us about their journey from the Thames to the Severn estuaries.

Up until recently both of us had only really cycled a few miles at a time, mainly commuting across Reading to our jobs. But in the summer of 2010 we had the urge to try something bigger, so why not start with cycling coast to coast across one of England's narrowest (but most 'hilly') stretches, from Whitehaven to Tynemouth! As this was our first cycling trip we decided to use specialist cycle travel company called Saddle Skedaddle. They provided all the accommodation and transported our luggage.

This was a great four day experience, despite the Lake District and Pennines being shrouded in fog and torrential rain, whilst the south of England had a heat wave!

This gave us a taste for more cycling travels, plus we'd gained confidence in doing something on our own. So, with Reading lying almost in the middle of the Thames and Kennet & Avon waterways, a plan was hatched to cycle from 'estuary to estuary'!

Due to lack of holiday time we decided to tackle the trip over two weekends. So early one June Saturday morning we set off to Reading station, Kay on her trusty 1980s Raleigh Pioneer and John on his modern Dawes Galaxy! We took the bikes on the train to Waterloo then Waterloo East to Charlton. Thankfully both trains were quiet because neither had

bike facilities, so we had to stand with them in the doorways pretty much all the way!

From Charlton we cycled up to the Thames and caught sight of the Thames Barrier. We decided this was a good proxy for the Thames estuary, and hence our start point! From there we pretty much followed the Thames Path, with the assistance of a Sustrans map and a London A-Z when the Path was not possible! We cycled around the Dome, past Greenwich and Rotherhithe, and made a first pub stop in Bermondsey with views of Tower Bridge as well as the Lancaster and Red Arrows fly-past for the Queen's birthday!

Attempting to cycle along the touristy Southbank on a sunny day was a mistake (had to get off and walk quite a lot!) but we had to have



The Thames Barrier



Houses of Parliament



Cycle lane in Battersea

risc
world shop

- Pottery •
- Jewellery & beads •
- Unusual gifts & ornaments •
- Didgeridoos, drums & other instruments •
- Environmentally friendly & organic products •
- World music, CDs & cassettes •
- Books & teaching resources •
- Baygen clockwork radios •
- Furniture •

35-39 London Street, Reading

& refresh yourself at the Global Café
• fairtrade teas & coffees • organic wines & beers •
• selection of international beers • tasty food •
Open Monday-Saturday 9.30am-5.30pm
Tel: 0118 958 6692 Fax: 0118 959 4357
Email: risc@risc.org.uk Website: www.risc.org.uk

**Need your bike repaired?
Don't have time or the
tools to do it yourself?**

Wheel building and truing a speciality.

Contact Bob Bristow on

0118 958 2056

for cycle repairs at a very reasonable price.

Estuary to Estuary



Caen Hill Locks

photos near the iconic bridges and landmarks! Heading towards Battersea we joined one of the premier cycle lanes on the northern embankment. Lovely, wide and clearly marked blue lanes - what a treat!

After another pub stop near Putney we cut a bend off the Thames and cycled across Richmond Park passing some grazing deer before exiting to Kingston. We stopped there for tea at Tony Roma's (delicious ribs!) and managed to miss a heavy rain shower. Then it was back on the soggy Thames path past Hampton Court and on to Shepperton by 8pm where we were staying the night at a Holiday Inn. 38 miles and 6.5 hours of cycling! Not great stats, but Kay's bike does only have about five and a half working gears!

We'd heard the forecast for Sunday was constant rain, so after relaxing in the hotel hot tub we bravely set off into the gloom! There was no let up in the weather, but this didn't stop us from enjoying the various landmarks en route to Reading. Chertsey and Staines (hmmm), bridges over or under the M3, M25 and M4; the Magna Carter and Kennedy memorials at Runnymede; seeing a friend of ours driving through Old Windsor (and resisting an invite indoors for a cuppa); pub stop in Eton; past Windsor



Bristol Suspension Bridge

Race Course; Dorney Lake (Olympic rowing venue); Bray; Maidenhead (hmmm); then down the A4 to Reading! Back home by 6pm for much appreciated Sweeney's pies! Another 37 miles and 6.5 hours of cycling.

The following Friday afternoon we both finished work early and set off for the second leg, pretty much following the Kennet and Avon canal all the way to Avonmouth! We made it to Kintbury before it got dark, 24 miles away with 3.5 hours of cycling, having stopped at pubs in Woolhampton and Newbury.

We stayed in a lovely pub/B&B on the canal at Kintbury, so the next morning it was straight back onto the tow path. The path was pretty lumpy for most of Saturday's cycling, but we persevered with it rather than deviate onto cycle route 4 which was mainly

roadways, which we suspected were also rather hilly! We took stops for snacks and beer at the Crofton Pumping Station near Bedwyn, then at Pewsey, then in Devizes after a small detour up a blooming great big hill to see their Millennium white horse and also the site of the Roundway Hill battle! Then it was onto Trowbridge after passing the Caen Hill Locks, the most spectacular bit of which was 16 back-to-back locks on a hillside! We reached our hotel by 7pm having covered 42 miles in 6.5 hours of cycling.

The final day of this much sunnier (but not too hot) weekend started in Bradford-upon-Avon which was quaint, followed by two aqueducts which were a joy to cycle over. Then, spookily in Bath as in Old Windsor we



Avonmouth

bumped into a friend - small world hey! After a quick drink there we joined the Bristol & Bath Railway Path, a lovely smooth cycleway with various remnants of the old railway line, terminating in Bristol city centre. Another pit stop for food and beer and then it was onto the final stretch, under the Clifton Suspension Bridge, following the Avon Gorge to Avonmouth. We cycled up onto the M5 cycle bridge (which runs right next to the motorway) so we were literally over the River Avon estuary! This final 36 miles took 6 hours of cycling.

177 miles in total over four and a half days! Having completed the quest we then caught trains from Avonmouth to Bristol and then back to Reading (this time with reserved bike storage!). Job done!! Now where next?

Kay and John Oakley

CycleReading Advertising

For 1/6 page display advert (87.5mm x 80mm)
RCC members £6 • Non-members £12
Bikes 'n' Bits (text only) free to RCC members
Contact the Editor (details below)



Contact Us

24 Curzon Street, Reading RG30 1DB

www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

0845 330 2543

www.myspace.com/readingcyclecampaign

Chairman	Adrian Lawson - 07716 348948 chair@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Secretary	Linda Edwards - 0118 959 0319 secretary@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Treasurer	Martin Cook treasurer@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Membership Secretary	Ron Knowles - 0118 939 4044 membership@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Publicity Coordinator	Richard Pearson publicity@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Events Coordinator	Jeanette Jeans events@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Reading Campaigner	Keith Elliott - 0118 958 5520 rbc@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Wokingham Campaigner	vacant wdc@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
West Berks Campaigner	vacant wbc@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Newsletter Editor	Tobias Gibbons newsletter@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Newsletter Designer	Alice Elliott - 0118 958 5520 designer@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Website Manager	John Seto webmaster@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk
Newsletter Distribution	Ian Humphrey - 0118 948 1172

You can now find RCC on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/ReadingCycleCampaign>

and Twitter: <http://twitter.com/ReadingCycle>

Next newsletter copy date: 30 January 2012

The newsletter is now available electronically, so if you'd prefer to go paperless contact the newsletter editor at newsletter@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

Campaign Diary

Help Out at the Farmers' Market

If you'd like to volunteer for the RCC stand please contact our Events Coordinator Jeanette Jeans (see above). Our stand at the Farmers' Market at Great Knollys Street will be on the first Saturday of each month from 8.45-11.30am:

Saturday 3 December 2011 • Saturday 7 January 2012

Saturday 4 February 2012 • Saturday 3 March 2012

Want to get more involved and meet more cyclists?

If you can spare an hour or two why not help us out with our local campaigning? Contact the Events Coordinator and she'll let you know when there are opportunities to help out.

It's great fun and we won't commit you to anything.

Council Contacts

Please let the relevant campaign officer know of anything you've reported.

Reading Borough Council

General cycling queries: 0118 939 0900 x 4881; parking: parkingservices@reading.gov.uk; traffic lights: 0118 939 0611; potholes 0800 626540

Wokingham Borough Council

0118 974 6302

West Berkshire Council

01635 519080 or www.westberks.org.uk

Windsor and Maidenhead

www.rbwm.gov.uk

South Oxfordshire

01235 531331 or southernarea@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Want to advertise in this newsletter?

For 1/6 page display advert like this one (87.5mm x 80mm):

RCC members £6

Non-members £12

Bikes 'n' Bits (text only)
free to RCC members

Contact the Editor, Tobias Gibbon,
newsletter@readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

PURCO PRINT

Creating a Sharper Image

Special Offers

Business cards on 300gsm cards
250 1 Colour £30.00 500 1 Colour £34.00
250 2 Colour £52.00 500 2 Colour £58.00
Letter heads on 100gsm bond
250 1 Colour £30.00 500 1 Colour £34.00 1000 1 Colour £45.00
250 2 Colour £55.00 500 2 Colour £58.00 1000 2 Colour £69.00
all of the above are subject to VAT.

Full Colour A5 Leaflets
printed on 130gsm gloss or matt 1 sided
1000 £105.00 5000 £130.00 10,000 £160.00

Full colour A4 Leaflets
printed on 130gsm gloss or matt 2 sided
1000 £140.00 5000 £210.00 10,000 £330.00 50,000 £925.00
No VAT on leaflets

Printers of the R.C.C. Newsletter
www.purcprint.co.uk

1a Upper Redlands Road, Reading, Berks, RG1 5JJ
Tel: 0118 9663145 Fax: 0118 9352759
Email: salma@purcprint.co.uk Web: www.purcprint.co.uk

Published by Reading Cycle Campaign, 24 Curzon Street, Reading RG30 1DB; Tel: 0845 330 2543
Opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily endorsed by the Campaign.