



CycleReading

WORKING FOR A CYCLE FRIENDLY READING

www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

Spring 2011 No 112

Annual General Meeting 2011



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Our AGM opened with a minute's silence for two cyclists.

First for Bernard Williamson, a founder member of both Reading CTC and Reading Cycle Campaign, who died of a heart attack whilst cycling on 19 May. Although he had moved to Bristol Bernard maintained his membership of both organisations. Our thoughts are with his family.

Second for Wouter Weylandt, a Belgian professional cyclist known to the chair of RCC Adrian Lawson, who died in an accident in the third stage of the Giro d'Italia. Although this may seem like a sad way to begin our meeting it certainly reminded us why we were all there.

The standard yearly business of accounts and elections was soon

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Campaign News



Reading Borough Council (RBC)

East is East and West is West

The reorganisation of the town centre one-way system went live on 18 April. The changes were driven by the plans to build a new southern concourse to the Railway Station and the consequent displacement of the buses and taxis on Station Approach.

As far as cyclists are concerned the changes have pros and cons, but on balance are probably of benefit, especially for westbound movements across town or from the railway station. However getting to the Town Hall or Post Office from the town

Routes now opened up for cyclists

- Friar Street is two way west of Station Approach
- Greyfriars Road is two way all the way to Friar Street
- West Street is two way between Friar Street and Broad Street

centre will now involve a detour or a short walk due to the changes to Friar Street.

Quick Wins for Cyclists

One year ago the then new Lead Councillor for Transport asked RCC if we had any ideas for 'quick wins' for cyclists. After a quick survey of views we produced a list of seven items spread across the town:

Routes now restricted for cyclists

- Friar Street is westbound only east of Station Approach
- Station Road is northbound (towards Railway station) only

West Reading

1. Oxford Road eastbound by Bedford Road junction: make the second lane a bus/cycle lane.

Central Reading

2. More cycle parking by the central Post Office.

East Reading

3. Lead in lane and advance stop lines at westbound traffic lights on London Road at Cemetery Junction.



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.

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

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

Jean Crossin, Kent

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Campaign News

North Reading

4. Where North Thameside westbound cycle path comes up the ramp and joins George Street at Reading Bridge, install a drop kerb, plus move the start of the current two lane south bound traffic slightly further south onto Reading Bridge.
5. Install lead in lane and advance stop lines at top of Prospect Sreet northbound by Prince of Wales.
6. Convert Pelican crossings on Caversham Road to Toucan and designate adjoining pavements as shared use where needed to make the approaches to the crossings legal for cycling.

South Reading

7. Toucan crossing required on Craven Road at junction with London Road (by RBH).

One year on we can report that virtually no progress has been made on any of these suggested 'quick wins'.

How To Spot a Drunk Cyclist (on Oxford Road)

How do you spot a drunk cyclist? It's the one riding in a straight line!

Anyone cycling on Reading's roads lately will know that this now necessari-

tates some fairly skilful weaving around the many potholes and sunken ironworks. On busy roads doing this whilst avoiding motorised traffic can be quite a challenge and doubtless deters the fainthearted.

Potholes can be easily reported to the local highway authority by using the Cyclists' Touring Club's Fill-That-Hole web site (www.fillthathole.org.uk). What's more, RBC ranks high in the league table of authorities' responsiveness in fixing potholes that are reported, having fixed 92% of those reported against a national average of 29%. Reporting your own most hated potholes therefore makes sense, even if it may seem like there are too many to enumerate.

Some roads are worse than others; RCC has already drawn the Council's attention to the very poor state of Tilehurst Road and The Meadway by Prospect Park. Oxford Road is also suffering badly from heavy traffic and harsh winters. One year ago RBC confirmed that funding had been allocated for a range of resurfacing works to be undertaken in Summer 2010, including Oxford Road west of Western Elms Avenue. After we noted that this resurfacing did not take place RBC told us that the works were

postponed 'due to the Oxford Road study being undertaken'.

The Oxford Road Study has been ongoing for over three years now, long enough for anyone studying this road to have got a doctorate in it. RCC presented our views and suggestions for Oxford Road to the Council in March 2008 as part of the consultation phase of this study. In April this year we were informed that the Study Group is nearing a stage of agreeing final proposals which should enable all work to be completed this summer/autumn. At the time of writing we have no idea what these proposals are - to date it seems the most significant result of the study has been to delay much needed resurfacing work to Oxford Road.

Keith Elliott
RBC Campaigner



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Campaign News



Wokingham Borough Council (WoBC)

Dougal Munro, our Wokingham campaigner, has not been campaigning recently due to a heart operation. In this piece Dougal lets us know how he got on.

In 1972 I went by overnight train Paris-Gap to start a cycling holiday in the Alps. A pleasant day's cycling later, I was relaxing before dinner in the TV room when a documentary on heart disease came on. I had to leave pretty quickly, far too squeamish on such thoughts. Regular cycling would keep me healthy of course, no need to worry really. In fact over the years occasional bits of indigestion gave pain around the heart and I did worry then.

Two years ago my local surgery invited older patients in to have their blood pressure monitored. Mine was high, even after 3 visits, so they listened to my heartbeat with an ECG; conclusion was irregular heartbeat, and I got an appointment in Cardiology at the

Royal Berks. They noted that the aortic valve was leaking and put me on a beta-blocker to slow me down. My symptoms had been just slight breathlessness when starting up a slight slope, so I really appreciate preventive medicine. The consultants could get the heart beating regularly, but the leak persisted and was causing damage in the heart. I needed a new valve. The surgeon told me that although it might sound like a huge operation to me, it was routine to them. During the wait for the op I was always hoping that they would perfect less intrusive ways of changing the valve, but it was not to be. They did a great job at the Heart Hospital in London. The follow-up at the Royal Berks was great as well, encouraging me back into an active life, most welcome after not being allowed to cycle for 3 months.

A cycling friend told me he knew several cyclists who have needed heart ops, maybe racing too hard in our youth, who knows. Most of the other patients I met were non-cyclists, I think, and their arteries were the problem. I'm still a fan of regular cycling.

Dougal Munro
WoBC Campaigner

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:

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Other Cycling News

Boris Bikes for Reading?

A cycle hire scheme similar to the 'Boris Bike' scheme in London has been approved for Reading by the Council. Although plans are in the early stages the scheme could involve as many as 1,000 cycles and 150 docking stations at key points throughout the town such as the station, university and local businesses. According to Reading Borough Council's website this would be the biggest such scheme in the country outside of London and the Council hope it could increase cycle usage by as much as 10,000 trips a day. Under current proposals the first half hour would be free. There may also be the possibility of combined bus and cycle hire tickets.

Reading currently has an 'OYBike' scheme with 3 stations and 15 bikes although the Council do not consider this enough to make a difference.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-12731002>

<http://www.reading.gov.uk/newsarticle.asp?id=5X9452-A7858696>

Oxford Cyclists Campaign Against 'Dangerous Cycling' Bill

Cyclox, the Oxford cycle campaign group, have labelled the proposed 'Death by Dangerous Cycling' bill a "waste of time". At the moment the very rare occasions when a pedestrian is killed or injured by a cyclist can only be dealt with by the 1861 'Offences Against the Person Act'. Cyclists can also be fined for dangerous or careless cycling. James Styring, chairman of Cyclox, argued that the bill is "shifting the focus away from the real problem on the road - killer motor vehicles". Steve Davies, of the Oxford branch of the Cyclists' Touring Club, said the bill was "over the top" calling it an "over-reaction to an isolated incident".

http://www.oxfordtimes.co.uk/news/yourtown/oxford/9003184.Cyclists_hit_out_at_new_bill/?ref=rss

www.readingcyclecampaign.org.uk

Fire at Swinley Forest

Swinley Forest near Bracknell - a popular centre for mountain bikers - is still closed due to forest fires. Up to 300 fire fighters have been tackling the blaze over an area of nearly 750 acres.

The blaze has been particularly difficult due to dry peat burning underground. Although the fires are now contained some parts of the forest will have to be simply left to burn out and fire services predict that it would take a week of non-stop rain to put the fire out completely.

The area is expected to be off limits for the foreseeable future.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-berkshire-13305538>

CTC Affiliated Membership

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

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- the weekly CTC email newsletter '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 £13 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)

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- I would like details of how I can help with Campaign activities
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Date

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*An additional donation to help fund our activities would be very much appreciated

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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

Dear RCC members,

The climate might be changing, well, it is changing, but the local effects have provided ideal cycling weather. Not a single shower in April, and although May has not been quite so stunningly hot, it has been dry. Lots of people have taken to bikes to get into town, and as usual all the bike racks are full.

The recent rises in the cost of fuel, the increase in the number of people out of work, and the ridiculous levels of congestion have forced the feet of a lot of people onto pedals.

It is not a great shift, but it is in the right direction; however, it appears to be something that has happened by chance, not by design.

The latest changes to the town centre have not made it a nicer place to ride a bike, and these changes will be ours to endure for a while now. I was amazed to see the taxi drivers' protest responded to within 20 minutes. You might not have seen the news about that, but on the day the changes came into force the taxi drivers were so upset with the changes they staged a

protest. Within 20 minutes the Council had senior officers out and negotiated changes to the satisfaction of the drivers and all was well. A few hours later I happened to cycle in to town and found my route from Great Knollys Street to the station blocked at the bottom of Station Hill. Although the signs said I could cycle all the way through I couldn't see how to do it, and ended up walking on the pavement. I since learnt that the pavement here is OK to cycle on. This is maddening in itself. Cycling on the pavement is wrong. To do no more than convert it to shared use with no attempt to change the layout is going to cause conflict. This is the route to the station, a fairly major destination and busy already.

Reading Borough Council had already promised to have officers on hand when the changes came into force to ease the transition. I spotted two outside the station, and confused about where I was supposed to ride (I hadn't seen the signs at this point, I didn't see them until a week or so later) I asked for some help. Sadly neither of them knew what was

supposed to happen here, so they rummaged about in their folders full of advice for people, but they didn't have a map of cycle routes. Another officer came along and joined the conversation, he knew no more. Some lads came past, and asked where to get a certain bus. Immediately they were handed some leaflets and had a detailed explanation of where to go.

A few more people leaving the station on foot asked various questions and eventually I realized I wasn't going to get any further so off I pedalled, not very happily.

I also noted a while earlier, in February, that there was a problem with the elaborate new bridge over the M4 at Junction 11. I noticed this in the dark and realized it was possible to ride over the steps and fall maybe 30 feet. I immediately emailed all the people on the Cycle Liaison Group to see if something could be done. No reply, so I emailed again, and again, and then went to the meeting. I raised it at our regular meeting, and was promised some action, but none came, and the problem was still present.

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Chairman's Letter

I eventually arranged a meeting with a senior Councillor, one with responsibility for transport, and after much to-ing and fro-ing we agreed a date. On the date of the meeting the councillor was delayed, but I waited at the Civic Centre at 6pm, until I got a message that he was going to be a while. I went home, a mile or so away. At almost 7pm I got another message, he would be there in five minutes, if I could still make it. I jumped back on my bike and rode back to the Civic Centre and soon enough he arrived and we had our meeting.

Of course I couldn't help but ask what the delay was, but to find that he had been sitting in traffic no further from the Civic Centre than my house is, for nearly an hour, did strike me as being ironic, to say the least.

The man responsible for our traffic woes had been a part of them for the last hour. Now if he had had a bike...

We have just had our AGM, and we had with us some people from other organizations interested in cycling too. We had a bit of a brainstorming

session, to identify what we could do, as individuals or together to help make Reading more cycle friendly, to get "more people on more bikes more often".

We quickly came up with a list of things, and while we don't have the



ability to make the sort of changes the Council can there are some things we can do. And we are going to do them, and hope that you will help us where possible. One thing we all agreed is to have our own Cycling Forum, where we can all get together and work together to make progress. We have had a Cycle Liaison Group with the Council for three years now, and as we are so pointedly ignored it isn't worth the effort. I am looking forward to putting in the effort though where we can make change. Even if it will only partly resolve the problems!

It got me thinking though. Imagine if we had all ridden around the town centre the day the taxi drivers did. Would we have got the same response? Would the Council have agreed some concessions there and then? Well after months of patiently asking for the gap in the fence on the bridge over the M4 I did finally get an officer out to have a look. After all this is Health and Safety, so you can expect a Council to respond to that. Eventually!

Adrian Lawson
Chairman

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Exercising During Pregnancy

When I discovered I was pregnant in January, my first reaction was a mixture of elation and apprehension. After leading a pretty much care free and independent life, the fact that I'd have to care for another person would mean a completely different lifestyle - which filled me with both apprehension, but also happiness that I'd now have a family.

My second reaction was how would I be able to fit exercise now with my new condition? Would that mean the end to exercise? No more half marathons? Being active all my life, the thought of giving that all up would be a challenge to say the least! My biggest achievement was ascending Mount Kilimanjaro (5,895m or 19,340 ft) and being a keen runner, participating in various half marathons and 10k races. Cycling, swimming and weights complimented my fitness regime - some would say my routine was gruesome.

I immediately consulted my midwife and a couple of gym instructors to find out what I could and could not do. I was actually very surprised to hear what pregnant women are allowed to do - indeed keeping fit is highly recommended, as it means an easier labour and faster recovery.

In my case, I was told I could pretty much follow the same exercise routine but to lower the intensity - and importantly, to listen to my body. If at any time, I felt tired, sick or in pain, I should stop, and lastly, to gauge how hard I was working my body, I should stick to about 140 bpm using a heart rate monitor to measure my efforts.

Feeling pretty upbeat at hearing this news, I continued with my routine and ran the Wokingham Half Marathon a month later, albeit my finish time was 5 minutes slower than my personal best, not surprisingly considering I was forcing myself to keep within the 140 bpm. It was still sub 2 hours, so I was pleased.

I have continued cycling, and despite being 5 months pregnant, I went to Swinley Forest to try out my brand new Kona Fire Mountain bike on the tracks. For those who know Swinley Forest, there are some rather scary uphill and downhill tracks. It was really tempting to go full pelt down the slopes, then pedal like a lunatic at the bottom to go back up the top; but instead, I would get off the bike and walk down the steep slope and push the bike back up to the top. I still had a very enjoyable afternoon, making

the most of where the terrain was flat and the gentle slopes - whilst keeping to my 140 bpm heart rate, of course!

Cycling whilst pregnant is actually not recommended by the NHS or various health organisations and generally is because of the risk of falling off your bike and



Lisa Lai

injuring yourself. Indeed as you progress in your pregnancy, you will tend to lose your balance more easily. Also, during the early stages of pregnancy, your blood pressure is lowered and very fit people tend to have low blood pressure, so the risk of feeling faint/dizzy is very real. So be sensible, cycle gently, be 120% aware of your surroundings and your body.

So my advice to those who aren't too sure about what they can or cannot do, the important thing is to seek advice from your GP or midwife. Do listen to your body - and if you feel tired or unwell to stop immediately. I guess the key thing is to be sensible - don't start training for the London to Brighton cycling event if you've always been a leisure cyclist. On the flip side, don't just use the excuse of "I'm pregnant" to veg on the sofa and do no exercise at all. Just keep to the routine you are used to, and if the risk of falling off your bike fills you with apprehension, other forms of gentle exercise like simply walking to the shops and back is better than nothing.

Lisa Lai was the former newsletter editor, married to John Seto, website manager. If you are interested at reading her review on climbing Mt Kilimanjaro, visit http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g293750-d459953-r19574335-Mount_Kilimanjaro-Kilimanjaro_National_Park.html

What's RCC Doing During Bike Week?

19 - 27 June

18 June: Water Fest

Dr Bike, BikeWeek Promotion Stands

19 June: Broad Street Day

Champions, Campaign, Sustrans, Cycle Smoothies, Dr Bike, Freebies Promotion

26 June: Reading Cycle Festival

Prospect Park

Annual General Meeting 2011 cont...

...continued from page 1.

complete; although there are still vacancies for Reading, Wokingham and West Berkshire campaigners, so if you are interested do get in touch with the committee.

The Chair's report mentioned a few minor improvements over the year for cyclists in Reading, but the fundamental problem of getting local Council Authorities to take cyclists seriously is still our main stumbling block. The illegal right turns onto Oxford Road that we found on our route audit at last year's AGM are still exactly as they



were and so are the problems identified with the Bath Road to name just two examples.

We are still the fourth largest cycle campaign in the UK, but this still begs the question, "why does Reading have so many disgruntled cyclists?"

After tea and biscuits the AGM then formed an informal question and answer session. This proved very worthwhile as we had members and representatives from several other local groups, including Reading CTC, Sustrans and the Thames Valley Park Bicycle Users Group. The session

ranged over a number of topics including cycle parking, encouraging more confidence in would-be cyclists, Bicycle Users Groups, commuting by bike, engaging with health professions and making more of the RCC forum.

We hope that this panel of cyclists from different groups in the area will continue to meet. A provisional date has been set and hopefully a group of this sort could give a much stronger hand to cycle campaigners in the Reading area.

If you want to know more, turn to the Chairman's letter on page 6.

Your letters

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

Bikes 'n' Bits

Tyres Wanted: Cheap pair of 650 x 20 or 23 (571) racing tyres in good condition. Not easy to find or afford these days! Email: dry@tesco.net

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www.myspace.com/readingcyclecampaign

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You can now find RCC on Facebook:

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

Next newsletter copy date: 1 August 2011

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 4 June 2011 • Saturday 2 July 2011

Saturday 6 August 2011 • Saturday 3 September 2011

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

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South Oxfordshire

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Published by Reading Cycle Campaign, 24 Curzon Street, Reading RG30 1DB; Tel: 0845 330 2543
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