

Pedal Power

The Newsletter of Greenwich Cyclists



Issue 63 July/ August 2007

Tour de France Prologue Report

An estimated 200 cyclists including Lewisham and Southwark contingents were on our feeder ride to the Tour de France Prologue by the time we reached Hyde Park around midday on Saturday July 7.

We'd distributed more than 120 of the blue wrist tags needed to gain entry to London Cycling Campaign's grassy viewing area at the Park Lane roundabout, and were joined en route by cyclists from Tower Hamlets and elsewhere. Those leaving Cutty Sark included groups from a local church and an impressive number of youngsters.

Ride leaders Chris LeBreton, Liz Delap, Stephen Craven and Ray Suomi had struggled until the last minute to find a safe route through Central London in view of TdF road closures, and without police support. Ultimately it was down to efficient amateur marshalling at key junctions, and all got there and back safely.

There were leaden skies on the days before and after, but the sun shone for both days of this TdF English stage which became a celebration of cycling. Hyde Park was full of biking stalls and freebies, about 1 million spectators crammed with us into the time-trial course around London landmarks. Big screens with commentary explained what was happening as the tour caravan, police motorcyclists, then the competitors and their team cars came flashing past.

July 8 was the first stage proper, from Greenwich to Canterbury after a slow cavalcade from London to Greenwich via Tower Bridge. No wonder Ken Livingstone was chuffed, predicting that the TdF will be back for more within the next five years. He and the London boroughs should seize the occasion to do even more for cycling in and around the capital.

South Eastern railways run most of the routes along the first stage, and they'd decided for the entire day of July 8 to restrict bikes to foldables or those dismantled and packed in large plastic bags. This worked, but proved a deterrent to many who would otherwise have found adequate space taking unbagged bikes on the longer trains.

West Kent Cycle Touring Club were the heroes of the day. They organized feeder rides from places like Bromley, Tonbridge and Bexley to the mecca of The Halfway House, Brenchley. This archetypal English country pub lies in a hollow surrounded by grazing sheep and rolling pasture; for the day it had become a Hotel de Ville in French tricolour, offering a wide range of guest ales and bar food plus local cherries. Policing was minimal, as on rural stages of the tour in France, and the 450 mainly cyclist spectators were able to wander at will across the road. Now came the caravan of whacky stunts again, the outriders, and at last, a breakaway group of six competitors followed later by the peloton concentrating grimly as they free-wheeled past at 50 kph.

Some of us were inspired to ride back through the Kent villages amid the lengthening shadows to Ightham, up and over Polhill, no problem we're on the tour.



Bike Week 2007 Report

This year, we decided to start planning early for Bike Week (the middle week of June every year), and the approach paid off. A planning group put together a programme of 16 evening and week-end rides, with a barbecue and picnic on the final weekend, which were promoted through Pedal Power, other forms of local advertising and the Bike Week website. One ride – the London Curiosities – was featured in a national newspaper.

Eight members volunteered to lead one or more rides each, and despite the poor summer weather only one failed to attract any riders. The largest turnout was 18 for the Lea Valley ride, and overall attendance was around 100 people. Each participant was given a prize draw entry form, and Greenwich council provided a substantial quantity of free "Good Going" branded gifts to hand out: water bottles, puncture repair kits and reflective wrist bands.

Bike Week 2007 was generally a success. The only disappointment was that family rides were poorly attended, for reasons which are not obvious.

Will you help us to make 2008 even better?



LCN Cycle Route Blocked

Greenwich Cyclists have joined with local residents and groups which oppose the blocking of a footpath and cycle path at the Blackheath Standard. (See also The Mercury, July 11, www.icsouthlondon.co.uk).

Some inhabitants of the Hexagon estate, citing crime and vandalism involving pupils of a nearby school, have managed to persuade Greenwich Council to overturn their own policy on cycling and to divert what was a section of Link 59 on the London Cycling Network. We have objected to the diversion on the grounds of safety and convenience and we maintain, along with other objectors, that antisocial behaviour should not be tackled by building walls.

In March 2004 the council's Charlton Garages Committee acknowledged that the site which has now been developed for housing "forms a pivotal position in linking up several cycle routes/roads. Therefore in order to conform to the Mayor's cycle route provision throughout the capital, officers have designed the site in order allow access through the development."

The Council's 2006 UDP master plan goes further, describing cycling as "beneficial to the individual, quiet, unobtrusive, non-polluting and efficient relative to resources consumed." It says the needs of cyclists will be pursued in all new schemes by "providing cycle routes in accordance with the London Cycle Network..."

The painted cycle lane symbols where we once entered this strategic route from the north and south prove, until they're removed, how the council's pious words are ignored in practice.

Cyclist Killed in Greenwich

The tragic death of a cyclist on June 26 in Greenwich Park has revived a debate about motorised traffic and speed limits in the royal park.

The victim was a 53-year-old man riding up The Avenue towards Blackheath, struck head-on by a car coming down the hill. The Metropolitan Police who are now also responsible for policing in the royal parks said on July 16 that the investigation was continuing, witness statements were still being taken, forensic evidence examined, and that the car driver had not been arrested nor had any charge been made at this stage. The inquest has been set for January 22, 2008, at Southwark Coroner's Court.

A packed meeting of Greenwich Cyclists on July 4 held a sombre but informed and wide-ranging discussion of the accident and its implications. Members agreed that an outright ban on motor traffic was desirable but would be hard to achieve; that a reduction of the speed limit to 20 mph from 30 mph should be sought; and we should ask the park management to realign the cycle path to the opposite, upside pavement.

Liz Delap and Anthony Austin met Derrick Spurr, the park manager, on July 13 to convey these points.

Greenwich Cyclists would like to encourage you to join the Friends of Greenwich Park at www.friendsofgreenwichpark.org.uk/printjoinus.html

Cost is only £5.00 and it also gives you 20% off refreshments at the park café. The more of us that join the Friends, the more we can make the park a place to be enjoyed by non motorized traffic, rather than a carpark/rat run.

Rides and Events



All rides and events are free (unless otherwise indicated) and open to all – LCC members and non-members. Please feel free to come along.

You can help improve Greenwich's cycling facilities

If you want a new cycle path, bike parking, better road access for bicycles, etcetera, please let us know by emailing your suggestions to Greenwich Cyclists' Planning Officer, Anthony Austin

anthony.austin@reuters.com

Cycle Training

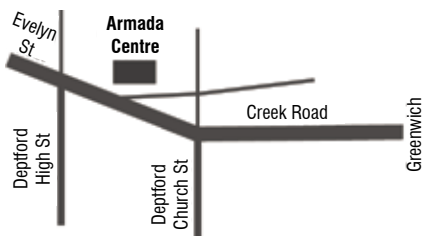
Greenwich Cyclists has two qualified training instructors who can provide low cost training to adults or children using National (or Bikeability) Standards. Training can be for groups or individuals and at a location to suit trainees.

Instructors work on a voluntary basis, payment is to cover insurance.

For more information see our website

<http://www.greenwichcyclists.org.uk/training/training.html>

or contact Liz Delap at liz.delap@teslaeurope.com



July



Saturday 21st: Wolfe, Westerham and the Weald. Medium level. Good brakes needed for one steep downhill. Suitable for most bikes. Meet at Cutty Sark Gardens 9.30am
Distance: 35 - 40 miles.
Details: Chris 07801 188768 (no texts please).



Sunday 22nd: Cobham for Darley and Dickens. Southwark Cyclists Kent ride through ancient woodlands and rolling downs. Suitable for most bikes.
Distance: 50 - 60 miles.
Details: Bill 07973 668642 (no texts please).



Saturday 28th: Dunwich Dynamo. 120 mile overnight ride.



Sunday 29th: Crossness Beam Engine on Steam Open Day (£5 entry). See Joseph Bazalgette's crowning glory. There is also the opportunity to pick blackberries by the Thames on the way back. Suitable for most bikes. Meet at Cutty Sark Gardens 10am
Distance: 25 miles.
Details: Anthony. 07740 434078 or 020 8691 8827.

August



Wednesday 1st: Greenwich Cyclists monthly meeting 7:30pm - 9:00pm Armada Centre, 21 McMillan Street (where Evelyn St meets Creek Rd, opposite the Post Depot) Deptford SE8 3EZ. Please ensure that you bring your bicycle into the meeting room with you.



Saturday 4th: Gravesend to Sheerness. The ride starts and finishes in Gravesend and includes a picnic on the beach at Sheerness. There are a several opportunities to cut this ride short if you don't want to do the whole ride. Suitable for most bikes. Meet Greenwich Station 8.45am for Gravesend train.
Distance: 60 miles.
Details: Ian 07986 872205 (no texts please).



Saturday 18th: Wolfe, Westerham and the Weald again. Details as above (July 21st)



Friday 24th - Tuesday 28th: The Wild Wales Challenge. Greenwich Cyclists are heading back to North Wales for the 6th time for a weekend of fun and challenging rides through some of the most beautiful scenery in Wales.

Go to these websites for more ride details:

Greenwich: <http://www.greenwichcyclists.org.uk/events/events.html>

Lewisham: <http://www.lewishamcyclists.net/Events.html>

Southwark: <http://www.southwarkcyclists.org.uk/social.shtml#now>

These websites will list more events and any changes to the rides and events listed.



Contact us

We meet on the first Wednesday of every month (next meeting 1st August - open to all) at 19.30 at the Armada Centre, 21 McMillan Street, Deptford.

See our website www.greenwichcyclists.org.uk

Join our mailing list

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/greenwichcyclists/>
email us enquiries@greenwichcyclists.org.uk



Greenwich Cyclists is part of the London Cycling Campaign (LCC)

LCC is the only organisation exclusively campaigning and lobbying to ensure the best possible routes, facilities and services for people who cycle in London. Membership benefits include: ● Free *London Cyclist* magazine ● Free third party insurance ● Up to 10% off bike gear at many London bike shops ● Free legal advice ● A special deal on theft insurance.

Join up today at www.lcc.org.uk and help make London a world class cycling city. Phone: 020 7234 9310.