

cycle

lifestyle



London Cycle Map
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Issue 4

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?



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Foreword



Once upon a time (a few weeks ago, actually), four young women in a car stopped at the lights beside me and pointed and

giggled. I naturally added a bit of buoyancy to my gait and juttied out my more-than-usually stubby chin as I strolled on by. Then, as the car passed me again after pulling away at the lights, the occupants all shouted "Dude!" out of the window, in broad daylight.

I was very pleased about this, and gave them a smile. I was particularly pleased because I was wearing a long smart coat that I had bought all by myself. I am not the best purchaser of clothes, but for once I seemed to have pulled off a fashion coup. I was so pleased I couldn't resist telling my assistant about my moment of glory later that day. She had jokingly called me "uncool", so I proudly said "well, actually..."

Well, actually, all was not as it seemed in my story. It hadn't escaped my assistant's knowledge that, unfortunately for me, "Dude" was not a reference to the Fonz, Bob Dylan or Gareth Bale, but rather to a scraggly-bearded, scruffy oaf from the film *The Big Lebowski*, who goes about in public wearing... a dressing gown. The prognosis for my coolness (and my coat) isn't good.

All of which got me thinking: is cycling cool? There are plenty of people out there who would say so. You've seen them in their skinny jeans with one trouser leg rolled up and a Tetris pendant hanging round their neck, with an eighties quiff ruffling in the wind as they cruise down Brick Lane on a luminous green racing bike. But then you've probably seen just as many of those, shall we say, 'opinionated' cyclists, who hate the idea of coolness and fashion and consumerism and all that: they've got clips on their beige corduroy trousers, they've got a basket the size of a sink on their handlebars, they've been cycling for twenty years (they probably even cycled to their own wedding) and they've got an organic carrot hanging from their neck.

It soon dawned on me that neither of these kinds of cyclist really captures what it's all about for the majority of Londoners. The only 'look' that really matters when cycling is the friendly smile you get from a fellow rider, and the only 'view' that really matters is the one from Waterloo Bridge on a misty morning. Most cyclists are enthused by the simple lifestyle benefits of getting around on a bike – the money saved, the fitness earned, and the happiness gained. That's what the cycle lifestyle's all about.

Ben Irvine

Ben Irvine

Emmeline's Ascent

Back when her kind should've kept
the fact of ankles to themselves,
it was mildly surprising:
that from the ground – where her

neat boots were tied with satin bows
and her knees, unremarked-on, stood
fixed beneath a triple skirt and had not
one single scar to boast of – she

thought to ascend the small stepladder
borrowed for the job from someone's father
and, loosely grasping the hand of a stranger,
swing brilliantly from the hip one long

athletic leg over the rim, into unsupported
territory, without even a pale second
given over to the fear of falling the five
shameful feet back to zero, from such

a high wheel; and that once up there
she recognised herself seeing not what
she never before could've imagined,
but everything exactly as it was – the

clear hard road, made for going along;
the terraces lined up for her admiration;
and on the other side of the clipped hedge
the unhatted men in the park, a few streets

but miles asunder from closed offices,
airing the first hint of their balding crowns
to the pigeons and anyone else geared up
for once to peer down on them from above.

Rebecca Watts

It's all about the ride



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Ride out the Recession...

Your guide to buying a second-hand bike

by Andrew Nethercot

In a recent survey into the cycling habits of Britons, Going Going Bike discovered that there is hardly any difference between the number of bikes owned by well-off households and less affluent ones.

This highlights one of the most positive things about cycling: its accessibility. If you know what to look for, you can buy a second-hand bike very cheaply – certainly at a fraction of the cost of an equivalent new bike. Then you can enjoy the lasting benefits of free travel, saving hundreds of pounds a year. No wonder cycling is so popular in London during a recession that's affected all of us.

Here are some top tips for buying second-hand:

Size is key

Make sure the bike fits. If you're buying online, check out a sizing guide to see if the bike's dimensions are suitable for you. But it's even better to physically get on the bike and check. Remember, it doesn't have to be perfect as you can adjust the seat post and saddle position to fine-tune it for a really comfortable ride; though do make sure you can stand over, and sit on, the bike comfortably. Avoid any feeling of stretching for the handlebars or being cramped over them.

Check its condition

Second-hand bikes come in all sorts of conditions. Superficial marks or scratches are not a problem,



but you should avoid a frame or fork which is rusty or has cracks or dents. Check out the frame closely, but also inspect the bike's components – the gears and brakes, and the 'bottom bracket' (which the pedals rotate around). If these are not in a decent condition it could end up costing you far more money to replace them. Also make sure that the wheels aren't buckled and that the spokes are rigid (they should give out a nice "pinging" noise if you pluck them like a harp). Tyres can be replaced if they are worn out.

Get the right price

Use the internet to do some price comparison. Online second hand bicycle markets are useful, but also find out what an equivalent bike would cost new. You can get some great prices at online auctions, and don't forget that you can make offers below the asking price to sellers in the online classifieds.

Make sure the bike is not stolen

Unfortunately a second-hand bike can sometimes mean a stolen bike. You do not want to buy a stolen bike. It encourages people to steal bikes and might result in the police wanting to have a word with you. However, if steps are taken to check the legitimacy of the bike being sold, then the marketability of stolen bikes will drop dramatically. Avoid areas which are notorious for selling stolen bikes, and trust your gut instinct about a seller. If you think they stole the bike, don't buy it from them. But the best thing you can do is check out the available bike registers to see if a bike being sold

matches one that has been reported stolen. A bike register acts like a cycling equivalent of the DVLA. They store details of bicycles and their owners, including whether a bike has been reported stolen. BikeRevolution.org and BikeRegister.com both allow cyclists to check their registers online for free by inserting the frame number or a registration number for a particular bike.

“Check out the frame closely, but also inspect the bike's components”

Ask questions of the seller

Find out how long the seller owned the bike and whether they bought it new. Get a feel for what type of rider they are and how many miles they've done, and how many of those were in wet weather. Has the bike been stored indoors in the dry, or outside in the damp? If you're buying the bike from a second-hand bike store you may be able to get a warranty for any problems the bike may develop in the first few months. It's worth asking! ●

Going Going Bike is the online marketplace for all things bike. With an innovative Prove It system ensuring a legitimate market for used bicycles, Going Going Bike is the online auction site where bicycles want to be sold. In addition to auctions the site offers bike news, comment and an array of further cycling stuff. www.goinggoingbike.com

First Time Tips

Our guide to making that first ride the first of many

Choose a bike

There are different kinds of bike for different kinds of journey, so you need to choose the right bike for yours.

Road bikes ('racing' bikes) are designed to be lightweight, aerodynamic and fast, with handlebars that curl downwards and skinny tyres.

Touring bikes are sturdier versions of road bikes, designed for long distances carrying luggage.

Mountain bikes are designed for rough terrain, with knobbly tyres, strong frames, a wide selection of gears, and often suspension.

Hybrid bikes offer a compromise between the speed of a road bike and the strength and gearing of a mountain bike. With smooth tyres and an upright riding posture that's good for visibility, they're a popular option for commuting.

Folding bikes can be folded away and carried like a briefcase. Useful for commuting, they can conveniently be taken on the train or bus. They have small wheels and fewer gears, and can be stored easily at home if you don't have much space.

Electric bikes are a more expensive option, with an electric motor offering assistance for getting up hills or on longer commutes.

Shed bikes are bikes that have been gathering cobwebs in your shed for years! Check them over before you get back on.

Then there are adapted cycles, tricycles, tandems, side-by-side cycles and recumbent cycles – making cycling accessible to almost everybody, including people with disabilities.

Check your bike

Before you set off you'll need to make sure your bike is safe to ride. Start with the following checks:

- ▶ Both brakes work well.
- ▶ Both tyres are pumped up (this will make your bike easier to ride as well as safer).
- ▶ The saddle height is correct (so that when sitting on the saddle your heel rests on the pedal with your knee very slightly bent). Also make sure that when adjusting the saddle height the seat post limit has not been reached (normally this is a marked band about 3 inches from the bottom of the seat post).
- ▶ The handlebars are tightened. Ensure that they cannot be turned with the front wheel between your legs, and that they do not move when pressure is applied from the top.
- ▶ The gears work smoothly.

If you are unsure then take your bike to the nearest bike shop for a quick service. When you buy your bike from a shop you can expect them to help you with these checks.

Get dressed

In decent weather there's no need to wear special clothing any more than there is for a walk to the shops. You can even cycle in smart clothes, so long as you're comfortable. Just make sure your clothing is neither too baggy (catching in the chain) nor too tight (restricting your pedalling). In winter, however, choosing the right clothes becomes more important. Above all, you'll need to make sure you're waterproof and visible (wearing light-coloured or reflective clothing). Check out our 'Winter Cycling' feature on page 26 for more information.



Accessorize

Some basic accessories are essential:

- **Lights.** By law you must have a front white light and a rear red light when cycling at night, and a rear reflector and pedal reflectors at all times.
- **A lock.** Spend as much as you can afford to get a stronger lock (or indeed multiple locks). Always leave your bike in a well-lit and busy place to deter thieves.

Others accessories are really useful:

- **A bell.** You'll find pedestrians appreciate an early, gentle warning of your presence if you're on a shared path – a couple of tinkles when you're still 10 metres or so away works well.
- **Mudguards.** These will help keep splatters off your clothes.
- **A rack and panniers.** Panniers are bags that attach onto a rack at the back of your bike, which enable you to be unencumbered while riding. The next-best option is a rucksack because this keeps your arms free. Never dangle bags from your handlebars.
- **A pump and a spare inner tube or puncture repair kit.** Punctures are rare, but it's good to be prepared.
- **It's not compulsory to wear a helmet to cycle in London, but many people choose to – especially in winter when the conditions can be more hazardous.** If you do, ensure that your helmet is of good quality and properly fitted. You could also consider buying cycle insurance, available from Cycleguard.

Plan your route

Preparing a good route is essential for cycling in London, but luckily it's one of the most fun parts. There are lots of helpful resources, including:

- **Transport for London cycle guides.** You can order them online at www.tfl.gov.uk.
- **LCN+ maps.** These can be viewed online at www.londoncyclenetwork.org.uk.
- **Local borough maps.** Contact your local council offices to find out more.
- **Google maps.** An especially useful resource which uses the Google map interface is www.bikehike.co.uk. You can interactively plot your route onscreen and find out gradient and distance data.
- **www.cyclestreets.net** – a journey planner for cycling which allows you to type in your start and end destination locations and suggests a route for you.
- **A good old-fashioned A to Z!**

When you plan your route you should aim for:

- Quiet roads or roads with cycle paths
- Low speed limit areas
- Parks and open spaces which allow cycling →

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beginner's guide

And you should avoid:

- ▶ Very busy junctions
- ▶ Large and fast roundabouts
- ▶ Dual carriageways
- ▶ Routes heavy with lorries
- ▶ Pavements. It's illegal to cycle on the pavement, unless it's signed as a shared-use path for cyclists and pedestrians.

If any of these are unavoidable, you can always get off and push!

Stay safe – the Sustrans guide

Tips for cyclists on roads

- ▶ Ride in a position where you can see and be seen.
- ▶ Beware of vehicles turning left.
- ▶ Make eye contact with other road users, especially at junctions – then you know they've seen you.
- ▶ Signal clearly at all times.
- ▶ Follow the Highway Code – don't jump red lights and don't cycle on the pavement unless it's a designated cycle path.
- ▶ Consider wearing a helmet and bright clothing, especially in towns, at night and in bad weather.
- ▶ In wet weather watch your speed as surfaces may be slippery and it will take you longer to stop.
- ▶ Consider getting some cycle training. All London's boroughs provide free or subsidised training.

Tips for motorists

- ▶ When turning left watch for cyclists coming up on your near side and don't cut them up.
- ▶ Give cyclists a wide berth when overtaking.
- ▶ Dip your headlights when approaching cyclists.
- ▶ In wet weather, allow cyclists extra room as surfaces may be slippery.
- ▶ Cyclists and motorists are equally entitled to use and share the same road space.

Tips for cyclists on shared-use paths

- ▶ Don't go too fast – it can intimidate others.
- ▶ Use your bell to let others know you are approaching, but don't assume they can hear or see you.
- ▶ Give way to others and always be prepared to slow down and stop if necessary. Remember to say 'thank you' if they let you pass.
- ▶ Keep left or on your side of any dividing line.
- ▶ Be careful at junctions, bends or entrances.

Tips for other path users

- ▶ Keep your dog under control.
- ▶ Keep to your side of any dividing line. ●

Find out more from Sustrans at www.sustrans.org.uk – or just phone a friend who cycles.

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Safer Cycling in Barking & Dagenham

A new initiative encourages cyclist-awareness amongst freight drivers

Following our recent recognition by Transport for London as an Outer London Biking Borough, the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham remains committed to promoting and encouraging cycling. We're continuing to improve and integrate our comprehensive cycle networks, develop the greenway network through our parks and open spaces, and provide free cycle training for all residents and workers. We're also engaged in a range of ongoing promotional and awareness campaigns.

With the launch of the new Cycle Superhighway Route 3, which links Barking with Central London, raising awareness of the increasing number of cyclists using our network has become a key priority. In conjunction with Transport for London, M2 Training has been commissioned to run a Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (Driver CPC) module called "Safer London Driving", tailored for the freight drivers operating in and around London.

The training module is designed to help equip vocational drivers with the knowledge, skill, motivation and confidence to operate safely on London's roads. As well as highlighting the vulnerability of other road users, it explains how London's streetscape is evolving to encourage more active travel and facilitate the ever-increasing cycling journeys within the capital and beyond.

"Raising awareness of the increasing number of cyclists using our network has become a key priority"

The course aims to make freight drivers and operators aware of London's changing streetscape and the need to be able to identify road users who are vulnerable and why. It will highlight drivers' responsibilities with an emphasis on professionalism; promote tools, techniques and technology that can improve road safety; and review driver attitudes through reflection and discussion, to improve personal driving practises.



In early autumn, Barking and Dagenham introduced a pilot course to local borough businesses, which was very well attended and benefitted from positive feedback. Subsequent to these events, funding has been secured to roll out 18 courses for local borough-based haulage companies, providing training for 360 freight drivers, helping them develop the knowledge, awareness and skills to adapt to the changing nature of the capital's roads.

If you are a local business based within the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham and feel you would benefit from this free training, please contact Lee Thornton at Lee.Thornton@lbdd.gov.uk or telephone 020 8227 3352. Please note places are limited and will be allocated on a first-come first-served basis. ●

Find out more at: www.lbdd.gov.uk/cycling

Give it a GO

Cycling school is a Wapping success

by Wendy Johnson

A year ago just one of the pupils at St Peter's London Docks Primary School in Wapping cycled through the school gates every day.

Now he has been joined by around 15 others, each making the daily school journey by bike.

The surge in cycling at the school has happened over the last 12 months or so, ever since James Scott from Sustrans – the charity that encourages people to walk, cycle and use public transport more – began working with the school's learning mentor, Alex Stead (36).

Their joint efforts are paying off and passion for pedalling among the pupils has soared. As well as the children who cycle to school every day, there are others who are occasional cyclists, and

those who leave their bikes at school to join in with lunchtime cycle sessions.

Alex said: "I'm a keen cyclist myself and I ride my bike in to school daily. In the past I would be pretty much alone in that, but now there are a dozen or more pupils all doing the same. Sharing that enjoyment from cycling is a huge part of the appeal."

The average school journey for primary school pupils in the UK is just one and a half miles, a distance that can easily be cycled by most. But getting children onto their bikes is a stage by stage process. In the beginning, many of the children at St Peter's owned bikes but didn't use them as a form of transport.

Alex continued: "One of the first things we did was to run a Dr Bike session. We had around 40 bikes



brought in by the children and James spent time checking them over, repairing and adjusting them to make them roadworthy and rideable.

"Since then, James and I have organised cycle skills sessions in the playground, giving pupils more confidence to ride their bikes, and bike breakfasts so that pupils who cycle to school are rewarded with a healthy breakfast when they get here.

"It has worked too. Many of the children are very keen on their cycling now. The boys have taken to it with particular vigour, but the girls are involved as well. Three of the girls have already achieved our level one 'BikeTricks' proficiency and are working towards level two.

"We have designated part of the school playground as a biking area, so that pupils can cycle at lunchtime. For some of the children who live too far away to be able to cycle in to school, lunchtime is their main opportunity to ride."

James Scott, the Sustrans Officer working with the school, said: "What we often find when we first start working with a school is that many children don't even consider cycling to school to be an option. They have always been driven to school by their parents and don't realise how easy and quick it would be to get there by bike instead.

"We have designated part of the school playground as a biking area, so that pupils can cycle at lunchtime"

"Once they start to discover that it is possible they are incredibly excited by it. For many, it's their first taste of independence.

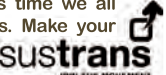
"We spend time looking at all the barriers to cycling to school – like not having a working bike, not knowing the right routes to take or feeling a bit wobbly and nervous. Then we unpick the problems one by one.

"We know how important it is that children learn healthy habits at a young age. They are more likely to take those habits into adulthood, which, given the rising problem of obesity in the UK, is vital. We also know that children who make an active journey to school arrive more alert and ready to learn, so cycling has a real knock-on effect in the classroom."

As well as working directly with the pupils, Alex and James secured funding from Transport for London for a new covered cycleshed for storing bikes, which was installed in the summer term. The school has also recently won £300 from bike retailers Halfords, which will be spent on tools, inner tubes and other essential equipment. And in

Quality Streets

Wouldn't life be great if the street outside your front door felt like your own space? Somewhere to chat with your neighbours, kick a ball with the kids, get about by foot and bike? Somewhere to give us all a better quality of life – a quality street. Sign up to our Quality Streets campaign and improve your local environment.

Sustrans makes smarter travel choices possible, desirable and inevitable. We're a leading UK charity enabling people to travel by foot, bike or public transport for more of the journeys we make every day. It's time we all began making smarter travel choices. Make your move and support Sustrans today.  www.sustrans.org.uk

September they scooped Sustrans' Bronze School Mark award in recognition of their efforts towards getting pupils cycling.

Alex says: 'These extra awards are a real boost, but the best reward is seeing a parent who once drove to school, now riding into school happy and confident with their child. I really hope we can entice some more'. ●

The work to encourage more pupils at St Peter's to cycle the school journey is part of Sustrans' 'Bike It' project, funded and supported by Tower Hamlets Primary Care Trust as part of their Healthy Borough Programme.

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Bike Dock Solutions

A doubling in the number of journeys being completed by bike within the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham has resulted in the authority turning to Bike Dock Solutions, the specialist provider of secure cycle parking equipment and accessories, to provide more than 200 cycle parking places across the borough.

Bike Dock Solutions has provided a range of products, including simple bolt down Sheffield Stands, London Stands and recycled steel Toast Rack stands, as well as cycle lockers and shelters.

"Cycling within the borough continues to grow and we have now been recognised by Transport for London as an Outer London Biking Borough," explains Nick Davies, Principal Transport Officer for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.

"Against this background we need to ensure that the borough is more accessible, safe and attractive for cyclists. A key element in this is to provide good quality, sturdy cycle parking spaces, located in suitable safe positions for their users."

The borough's cycle parking programme has included installations at key destinations such as shopping areas, transport interchanges, schools,

leisure centres and council buildings. In addition, cycle parking stands have been installed within the borough's parks, cycle lockers located within London Road Car Park, and a cycle shelter provided within the Civic Centre for council staff.

Cycle lockers are a safe and secure way to lock away bikes and peripherals. They are designed to be narrower at the back than at the front to accommodate several bikes together and therefore save space.

Bike Dock Solutions' Sheffield Stands are fabricated locally from highly durable 50mm mild steel tube and are a good value, low maintenance and minimalist solution to bike parking, where the shape allows both the bike frame and wheel to be securely locked onto the stand. The London Stand, which is hot dip galvanized and polyester powder coated for an extremely durable finish, comes complete with steel cycle parking badges and reflective tape. The steel base frame of the company's Toast Rack product provides added stability and strength against wear and tear and is ideal for locations requiring several stands.

"In the UK, a bicycle is stolen every minute and fewer than 5% of those are returned to their owners," explains Bike Dock Solutions' Josh Coleman.

"Cyclists are more likely to have their bikes stolen than motorcyclists or car owners are to have their vehicles stolen, and cycle theft is the single greatest deterrent to cycle use after road safety fears. Barking and Dagenham's decision to install this equipment should reassure cyclists that they can travel and park with confidence throughout the borough." ●

www.bikedocksolutions.com

Small is Beautiful

Bike Dock Solutions has launched the MiniDock, a new range of child-oriented cycle storage racks.

Ideal for school premises as well as town centres and even home use, these colourful and easy-to-use units are specifically designed for storing children's bikes and scooters. MiniDocks are environmentally sustainable, space-saving and secure, and are highly cost effective at just £40 per bike.

At less than 1.5 meters in diameter, the MiniDock not only saves space, but appeals to children by offering colourful, innovative and playful designs. There are three standard MiniDock designs: a rocket, a flower pot and a spider.

Security is important even with children's bikes, so, in line with the rest of the Bike Dock Solutions range, the MiniDock allows children to lock their bikes and scooters securely in place. The MiniDock can securely accommodate eight bikes and eight scooters and is designed to fit 12"-26" wheels, so is specifically aimed at children up to 11 years of age. The MiniDock can also cater for the occasional teacher or adult bike with 26" wheels.

The MiniDock is a sustainable product which is 100% recyclable. Each MiniDock is made from at least 40% recycled steel and all are manufactured in the UK.



London Cycle Map Campaign

Putting cycling on the map in London

Map illustrations produced by
Kolb at kolbillustration.com

KOLB

If you ask a non-cyclist why they don't cycle in the capital, the chances are they'll say "it's too dangerous", or "it's too hard to navigate". The two assumptions are often linked: people are worried that getting lost on a bike will make them more vulnerable.

Wouldn't it be great, then, if London had a cycle network that was as safe and easy to get around as the London Underground? If London had cycle routes similar to the Victoria Line, the Northern Line, the Bakerloo Line, and so on? If London had a cycle map that was as user-friendly, clear and stylish as its famous Tube Map?

Wouldn't it be great, that is, if you could cycle throughout the capital just by consulting a London Cycle Map, remembering a few colour-coded routes, and then following signs on a safe, continuous and reliable network, just like you do on the Tube?

Cycle Lifestyle's London Cycle Map Campaign aims to make it happen. And you can help us – by signing the petition at www.petition.co.uk/london-cycle-map-campaign.

The status quo

At the moment, London has a variety of different cycle route systems – on designated streets and off-road areas – with dedicated facilities for cyclists, such as cycle lanes and other signs and markings. The most prominent systems are the London Cycle Network and its successor the London Cycle Network Plus. Then there are lots of different Local Authority routes, a range of London Cycling Campaign advisory routes, and the Mayor's new Cycle Superhighways. Finally there are the various routes managed by the transport charity Sustrans: National Cycle Network routes, Greenways routes and Safe Routes to School. Phew!

The problem is, each of these route systems is supported by different signs and maps: there is no single map, or system of signage, for a unified

network of cycle routes extending throughout the capital. That's OK if you're making a local journey, when you know the streets pretty well. But for longer cycle journeys – like a journey to work or a business meeting – you'll typically need multiple maps and knowledge of multiple systems of signage. You'll also need to know the names of the streets the routes are on, because the signs can be insufficient. This means monitoring hundreds of unfamiliar 'turn rights' and 'turn lefts' as you go. For too many Londoners that's too much hassle. Hardly surprising. Travelling from one part of the capital to another by bike can be like trying to drive to Scotland without using motorways.

Eighty years after Harry Beck

Cycling in London today is similar to catching a tube train in the early twentieth century. In 1931, Harry Beck's famous Tube Map succeeded in taming a complex system of tracks, making it far easier for passengers to navigate. He was an uncommissioned hobbyist at the time, but now Beck's design is synonymous with catching the Tube in London: you just take one look at the map, identify which lines to travel on, which direction to travel in and where to change – then away you go. With a minimum of planning and memory you can follow signs that take you from virtually anywhere to anywhere in the capital.

Something similar is needed today for cycling: a single London Cycle Map that you can quickly use to identify which routes to travel on, which direction to travel in and where to change – then away you go. With a minimum of planning and memory you could follow signs which would enable you to cycle from virtually anywhere to anywhere in the capital.

The most exciting thing about a London Cycle Map is that it would benefit potential cyclists above all. Regular cyclists, by definition, aren't put off by worries about safety or navigation. But many regular people

are. By helping to overcome the main perceived barriers to cycling, a London Cycle Map would provide encouragement to people who otherwise might not have had the confidence to get on their bikes.

Cycle Hire – but where to?

Since the launch of TfL's excellent Cycle Hire scheme in August 2010, accessibility to cycling has increased in the capital, so it has become more important than ever to help potential cyclists get around. Yet when you look at the official map showing all the docking points for the hire bikes in central London, what you see is a conventional street map of the area, with no information about which roads are good for cycling on and which are heavy with traffic. Of course, you're free to explore on a bike. But unless you already know the city really well, the prospect can be daunting rather than exhilarating.

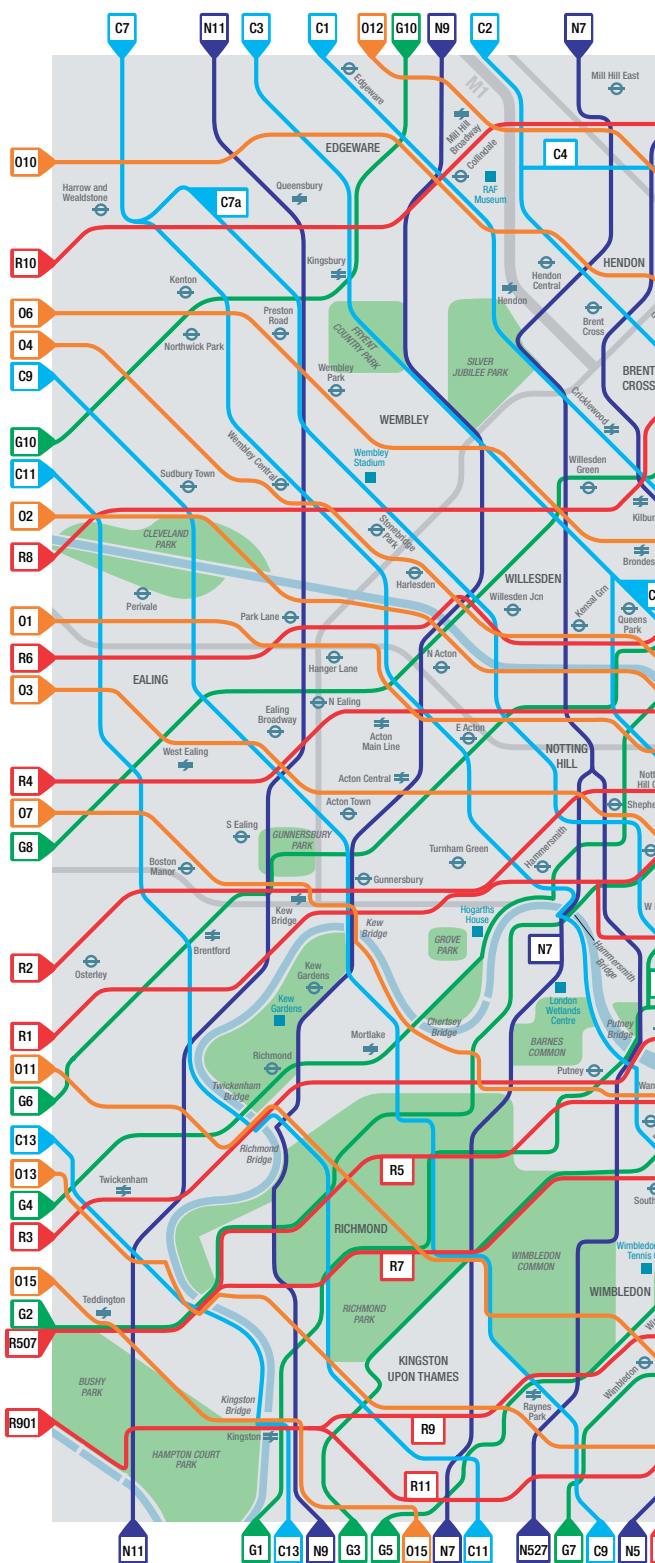
That's where the London Cycle Map comes in. It'd help people on hire bikes, especially novices, to find their way through London's maze – whether they're commuters beating the rat race, tourists using bicycles to visit parks and landmarks, students hopping from lectures to cafes to parties, shoppers hitting the highstreets, football fans cruising to the game, families exploring on a fun day out, friends meeting for a bike ride, or health-conscious Londoners keeping fit.

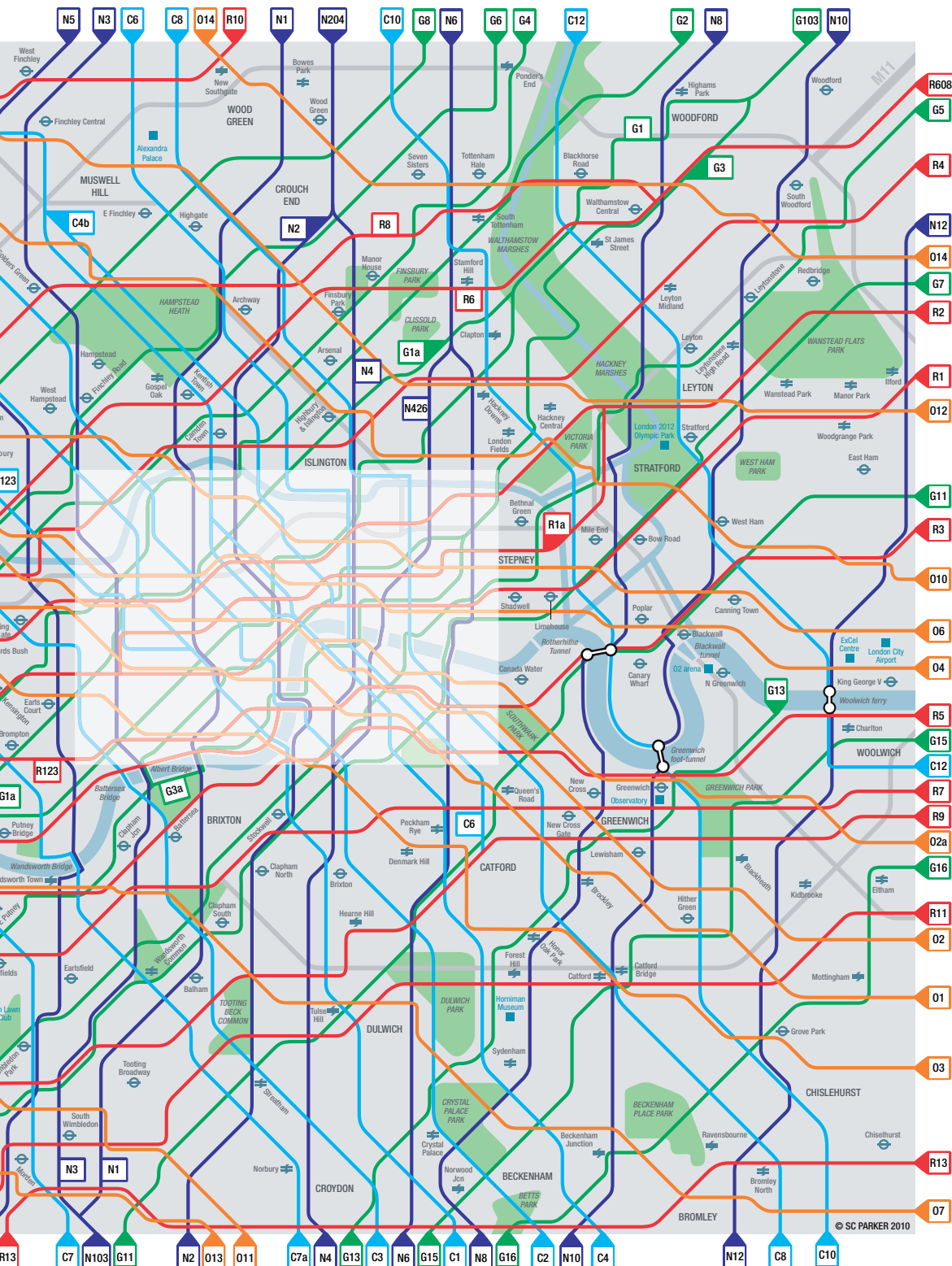
Why not just use the web?

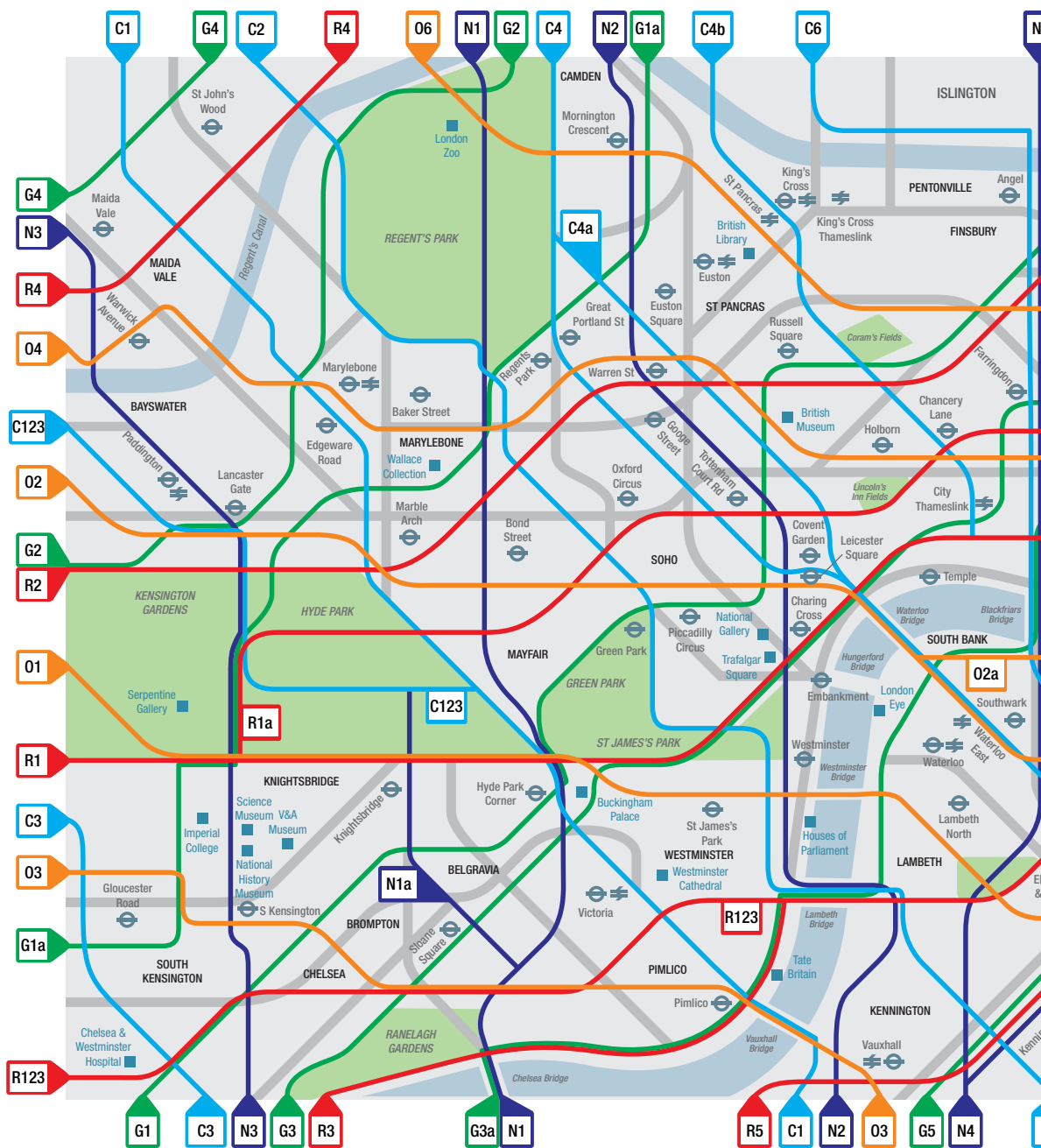
Why not download an 'app' for cycling in London? Or use SatNav? Or consult one of the many routefinders available on the internet?

The problem with online routefinders is that, whilst they look great on the screen, they're not so great once you're out and about on a bike. Often the routes they recommend are presented in the form of a long list of 'turn rights' and 'turn lefts' which you have to print out for each journey (or read off the screen as you go). As an illustration, for a 55 minute ride I was given a list of more than 100 directions by the routefinder cyclestreets.net! Obviously, you can't memorise all this information before you go, so you end up cycling around with a piece of paper or a mobile phone wedged between your hand and the handlebars, stopping at every turning to consult it. Not ideal.

Naturally, most people would prefer to have an iPhone or SatNav 'talking' them through the city as they go, rather than having to monitor all those directions. This seems like a great idea at face value, but it has shortcomings that a London Cycle Map doesn't. For one, there's no substitute for proper signage on the road, showing you where to go. If you doubt this, consider what it would be like catching the tube using SatNav, rather than the Tube Map and its signage. You'd be blindly following the little voice your ear, scurrying round corners and up escalators whenever it told you to. You couldn't



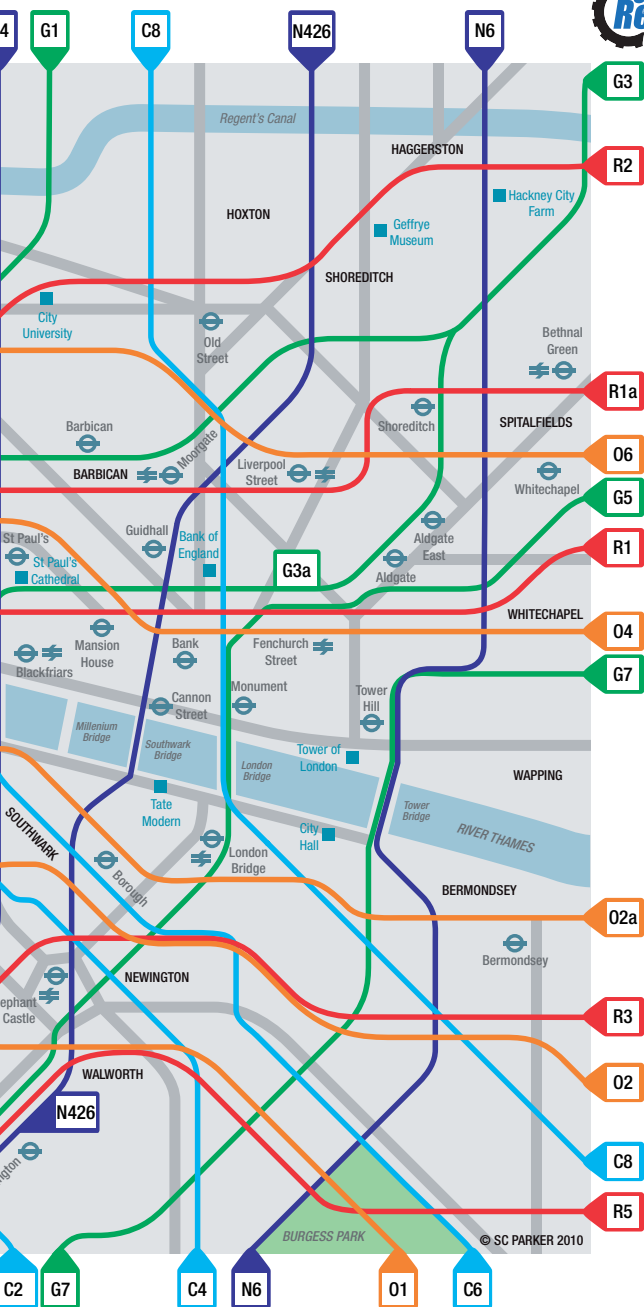




ask a fellow-Londoner if you missed your turning or got confused, because they'd only know what the little voice in their ear was telling them. Plus you'd have to be constantly vigilant – just in case there were further instructions in your ear, lest you missed your stop or train. You'd be so disoriented you'd probably end up designing a Tube Map.

But perhaps the biggest problem with using Sat-Nav technology for cycling is that it's so exclusive. People always wax lyrical about the 'free information' available online. But hang on a minute – since

when was a laptop or an iPhone or a broadband connection free? One of the wonderful things about a London Cycle Map is that it would make travelling in the capital genuinely free. And this would benefit some of the poorest Londoners the most, helping to encourage enterprise and social engagement in the process. A properly usable cycle network would, in a stroke, lower the amount of expendable income people would need to be able to participate in the economy, whether they're starting a business, hunting for a job or travelling to work.



Simon Parker's London Cycle Map

Parker's map (aka 'The Compass') proposes to organise London's current cycle network into a series of long, straight parallel routes, which comprehensively dissect the capital like waves, at different angles evenly spread throughout the 360° range of a compass. The routes are grouped and coloured (Red, Blue, Cyan, Orange, Green) according to one of five different directions, and terminate (in most cases) around the perimeter of the map. There (and, in some cases, in the main body of the map) they are

labeled and coded by combining the first letter of their colour with a number (R1, G4, and so on). A smaller, central London map (left) is embedded within the Greater London map (on the previous page).

Sounds complex? In reality it yields a stunningly simple journey planner. You can see for yourself by trying it out in your mind's eye. Imagine you're in Woodford (up in the top right-hand corner of the Greater London map), and want to get to, say, Wimbledon (down in the bottom left-hand corner). All you'd have to do is follow route G1 all the way down to where it intersects with N527, and then swap onto this new route, which would take you into Wimbledon. Most journeys would be as simple as this – just remembering a few routes and where to change from one to the other, then following signs on the road, as you might in a car. Much easier than remembering hundreds of 'turn rights' and 'turn lefts'! And a bargain, too, when you consider that the scheme could be implemented for a cost of £1.6 million, as estimated by Brian Deegan, the development manager for the current London Cycle Network.

How does Parker's map work so well? For people interested in the technicalities, here's the theory behind it. Because Parker's 'Compass Colours System' dissects London so thoroughly, wherever you were you would always be near five routes, each of which extends out in one of ten different directions evenly spread throughout 360°. To appreciate this, just draw a star with five lines, and look at the centre of the star. From there, you can 'travel' towards the edges of the page in ten different directions. On Parker's Map this means that, wherever you were in London, you would always find a long straight cycle route nearby that's marked with a single colour and leads in the general direction of your destination. Parker's system has these long straight links between all possible locations in London written into its DNA.

Cycle Britannia: an Olympic legacy

Britain has always prided itself on the quality of its design and the daring of its innovation. In 18 months the eyes of the world will be on London for the 2012 Olympics. What better way to show our commitment to cycling as a truly modern form of urban transportation than an iconic London Cycle Map? Travelling between Olympic venues in the most uplifting and stylish way, spectators could marvel close-up at the beauty of the capital's streets and parks. The city would feel cleaner and friendlier, leaving a sunny image in the minds of its visitors, who'd carry London's shining example the world over.

If you want to help make it happen, then please sign the petition at www.petition.co.uk/london-cycle-map-campaign.

Find out more about the London Cycle Map Campaign at www.cyclelifestyle.co.uk •

The Best Cycling Streets in London...

Revealing the best of the backstreets

by Elizabeth Hunter

Cycling is easily the best way to really get to know London, to get under its skin and into all its fascinating nooks and crannies. Travelling by public transport leaves you with a trace map of the major routes, but no sense of what lies in the gaps. Unless you have a friend living off the beaten track, or an obscure errand to run, you'll never discover the fascinating lands between the lines of your mental grid; the unusual houses, tucked-away parks and stark-but-striking estates. Out and about on two wheels you can't help but stumble on hidden gems. This series will help you find some of them.

Every morning during rush hour hundreds of neon-clad bikers emerge from sedate Barnsbury in North London, before crossing Regent's Canal and Pentonville Road then whizzing along Amwell Street into the city. It's a street that has all the most important elements of a pleasant cycle route; motorised traffic is light and devoid of the big beasts of the road (buses, lorries and taxis), the cycle lanes are well marked, and best of all it's a wonderful long, gentle slope down to Rosebery Avenue. A few speed bumps at the bottom do interrupt the momentum, but with the odd strategic swerve it is possible to freewheel happily down the entire length of the road. Always good for letting out your inner child and refreshing your soul before shutting yourself in that office.

Amwell Street also merits looking up from the tarmac and taking in the surroundings – or even locking up your trusty steed and having a wander around. You'll find fairly grand, mostly Victorian and Georgian terraces with a nice scattering of trees. Bustling Upper Street is only a minute's walk away, but the fashionable hordes never clog up the pavements or wander blindly into the cycle lanes on Amwell Street. Despite being in the centre of a triangle made by some fairly serious roads (Rosebery Avenue, Pentonville Road and Farringdon Road) it feels quiet and secluded.

It is, indeed, the kind of model, villagey neighbourhood that anyone would want to live in – if you had a few spare half a million that is. It even has a residents' association, which might be why it has re-





tained so much personality. Although Amwell Street is clearly a sort of high street for the residential area, there isn't a chain shop in sight, no green swinging Starbucks sign, no garish golden arches. Even their less intrusive (read more yuppie-friendly) variants EAT and Leon are notably absent.

Instead, the footpaths are lined with fascinating, quirky little independent outlets – some of which, like 'Unpackaged,' look as though they've been there since Dickens popped in for his groceries. There's a little boutique called 'Lie Down I Think I Love You', a lovely local florist and everything you could possibly want in order to make your high-ceilinged terrace flat feel like home. It's a great place for window shopping, if you can't afford the designer lighting. The friendly pun in the sign for the amWELL Petshop always raises a smile, whilst Filthy MacNasty's, the local pub looks a lot more pleasant than the name would indicate.

Amwell Street is more than a convenient conduit to your more central destination – it's an intriguing little slice of community life. So next time you are happily bombing down it, stop and have a look. ●

Check out Elizabeth Hunter's blog 'The Trusty Steed' at: thetrustysteeds.blogspot.com

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New Bike on the Block

Ditch the city life and head for the Dales...

by Gareth Jenkins



“We chose the Dales because it has a wonderful reputation for cycling, due to its winding, sloping roads that scribble their way around some of the most ancient, untouched, beautiful British scenery”



Today's ride feels a bit different to my usual commute. The visibility isn't the best as it's a little misty, the air a little fresher and a little more crisp. The cars are fewer and I haven't heard a single horn so far. And my quiet cycle ride has been interrupted by an erratic white silhouette on the road ahead. It's weaving about dangerously, obviously in a hurry. It stops without signaling and then speeds off making a strange noise. It doesn't faze me. I don't even tut. The truth is you get used to the sheep on the roads in the Yorkshire Dales.

Yep, The White Van Driver is a million miles away from where I am right now. I am on a bike in Swaledale, probably the most remote area of the UK I've ever been to. I've stopped at the top of a hill and the warm morning sun is slowly burning off the low-lying cloud. I'm surrounded by (real life)

rabbits, cows, sheep and stone walls – and if you'll excuse me I just need to stop for a minute to admire the autumn sun rising over the opposite hill and illuminating the valley below in pastille oranges, glowing reds and deep warm greens...

Sorry, let's get back to it... That was close... I could feel a poem coming on then.

A few weeks earlier someone had whispered in my ear that cycling isn't necessarily just a cheap, healthy way to get from A to B. Apparently there are all sorts of people who are taking to their bikes and doing it for... fun? To test this theory out, four of us decided to get away from London for a long weekend "oop north".

We chose the Dales because it has a wonderful reputation for cycling, due to its winding, sloping roads that scribble their way around some of the most ancient, untouched, beautiful British scenery. →



As I sit on top of the world and my breath frosts in the air, I can see the hype is all true.

The hills of the Dales aren't the leg-breaking inclines I was expecting. They're a challenge, sure, but the female contingent of our group – who were more or less cycling novices – coped fine with the undulating roads. And the scenery is lovely enough to use as a constant excuse to stop for a picture if you need a break. One day without my camera I had to change tack and say I needed to stop to "contemplate nature's wonder". All this means that the summits are well-earned and the roll down the other side fixes a childish smile on your face for at least twenty minutes afterwards.

"The scenery is lovely enough to use as a constant excuse to stop for a picture if you need a break"

We got our bikes from The Dales Bike Centre, a family business run by Stuart and Brenda Price. Originally from South Shields, Stuart came to Swaledale for a weekend's mountain biking in the early nineties, and never left. I can see why. He and his wife now run workshops, rent bikes, sell equipment and manage a lovely little tea shop onsite where you can get some delicious cakes to replace the calories you've burned off during the morning's ride.

On picking up our hybrid bikes we got a great explanation on how they worked and what the basics were. Everyone was extremely friendly and they clearly care about all their customers, from complete beginners to experienced campaigners.

I am someone who on average makes and receives about three calls a week on my mobile phone, so the fact that this part of the Dales struggles to get a




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decent signal never really crossed my mind. But it had occurred to *Cycle Lifestyle's* ever-vigilant editor, Ben. "What should we do if we need assistance, for whatever reason?" he asked. His Blackberry was poised to take down the proposed safety protocol – perhaps we'd need to call the "National Emergency Cycle Call Centre" or wait 15 minutes for the "Dales Cyclist Pick Up Vehicle" timetabled patrols? The answer we got was "knock on someone's door". I don't think four people could possibly have felt more like city folk if they'd turned up to the bike centre in suits, carrying briefcases.

That, I felt, was perhaps the most poignant moment of the holiday. What are we, if, when we are in trouble, the least conceivable answer is simply to ask another human being? It's this simple, unfussy, friendly philosophy that we experienced throughout our stay. For this reason, I urge you to do as we did. Cycle around the Dales, see Britain, dodge the sheep, pop into a pub for lunch, visit the tea shops, pick your eggs up from the farmers' honesty boxes, chat with your neighbour about the coal for your open fire, and let the stress melt away with every rotation of the pedals. ●

www.dalesbikecentre.co.uk

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Winter Cycling

Tips on wearing the right clothes and staying safe, whatever the weather

by Richard Salisbury

Don't let the winter weather put you off cycling. Properly prepared cyclists are the warmest commuters of all, and cruising home on a bike through the sparkling city lights is an exhilarating, uplifting experience. Richard Salisbury from Pedal Precision offers some top tips on wearing the right clothes and staying safe and injury-free this winter.

Layer Up

For many new cyclists, clothing can be one of the most confusing things about riding in the cold. How much should you wear? Will you freeze or get too hot once you're riding?

Aside from the obvious importance of wearing gloves and a hat to keep your extremities warm, the

key to solving the clothing conundrum is having a number of layers at your disposal during your ride. Here's a guide to the most useful layers:

Good-quality base-layer. This is where to spend some money, if possible. A base layer made of merino wool or similar will wick sweat away from your body while staying fresher-smelling wash after wash.

Mid-layer. This can be a short- or long-sleeve jersey that you already have from the summer. It will give the sweat somewhere else to go and provide warmth against the outside air.

Gilet. A windproof vest that you never knew you needed but, once you've got one, always seems to be perfect, whatever the weather. Most of the time it can provide ample warmth over a base- and mid-layer during our English winters.

Warm windproof jacket. These jackets are versatile. They'll keep you warm when even an Eskimo would be staying in to watch the X-Factor, and they're water-resistant against everything but the rarest deluge. They're also much more breathable than proper waterproof jackets, meaning you'll build up far less sweat under your layers.

Rainproof outer-layer. If the rarest deluge does occur, it's nice to have that outer rain jacket in your bag or pocket.

These layers for the top half of your body will give you enough flexibility to combat most riding conditions, making you feel confident enough to want to get out and cycle whatever the weather. For the bottom half of your body, thermal tights are a good investment.

Another top tip is to invest in a set of arm- and/or leg-warmers. This will effectively enable you to turn every short sleeve jersey into a long sleeve one, and every pair of shorts into tights, when the conditions demand it.

Ride (even more) defensively

Obviously you need to be alert to other road users at all times of the year, but somehow the winter has a knack of bringing out folk who really should never have passed their driving test. Who knows whether it's the darkness, rain or colder temperatures; just assume every vehicle



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will take the most dangerous course of action, then it's always a nice surprise when the majority don't!

You can certainly improve your own riding technique in the winter. Rule number 1 is to be more careful and slow down a little if and when conditions get slippery or visibility is poor. Some more specific tips are:

- **Look ahead:** Looking further ahead can help you avoid large puddles, slippery areas or other obstacles in good time, and so avoid having to make last-minute manoeuvres.
- **Stay straight:** In wet weather, avoid turning across man-hole covers or areas with lots of yellow/white lines on the road. The rain turns them into ice rinks.
- **Go easy on the front brake:** In wintry conditions, try to shift a little more emphasis onto the rear brake by placing your body weight a little further back and squeezing the front lever more gently. It's much easier to control a sliding rear wheel than a front one.
- **Keep it on the outside:** Your weight, that is. When cornering, especially on greasy roads, keep your inside leg bent and your weight pushing down through your straight, outside leg. This has two benefits. Bending your inside leg keeps the inside pedal high and away from the tarmac, while straightening your outside leg keeps your balance in the right place and maximises down-force from the tyres onto the road surface, giving your wheels a better grip.

Warm up

Make sure you warm up properly, even if you are just riding to work. Picture your muscles as a network of strands made of blu-tac. Cold blu-tac doesn't stretch very well before it snaps, so take it easy for the first 15 minutes of your ride. Avoid sprinting to beat that amber light, or racing the cyclist next to you when it goes green again. Once



Photo © www.tgorden-design.co.uk

“A base layer made of merino wool or similar will wick sweat away from your body while staying fresher-smelling wash after wash”

you're warmed up you'll be able to put more effort in, and won't risk injury. Many of the niggling, overuse injuries people develop can be put down to not warming up properly, and it's easy to see why this becomes even more important during the winter (imagine freezing the blu-tac before you start).

Keep on top of the maintenance

Winter is the time when you really do need to keep your bike running cleanly and smoothly. I speak from experience when I say there is nothing more depressing than walking down the side of a dual-carriageway in the rain with a conked out bike. Regularly checking all the major components for wear and tear can save you a lot of hassle later.

Finally, Be Safe Be Seen

It's remarkable the number of cyclists you see out there riding with dark clothes on or with lights that have all but run out of battery power. Don't be one of them. Make sure you have some reflective aspects to your outer layer of clothing: most winter jackets, jerseys and bottoms include some reflectivity nowadays, but you can also buy reflective bands for your arms and legs, so there's no excuse. And make sure you double check your lights before each ride. If you're in doubt, you're not visible enough! ●

www.pedalprecision.com



The Buzz about Town

Six great things about electric bikes

by David Farr

Getting up hills more easily

With the motor switched on, an electric bike makes most hills in London effectively flat, thereby increasing your average speed. Provided you supply a reasonable amount of effort, you can expect to climb hills of 1 in 10 (a 10% gradient) on an electric bike with ease: a really useful boost for some cyclists.

Personal Fitness

Surely a conventional bike will keep you fitter?

That, of course, depends on how much you use it.

Research has found that 46% of conventional bikes are used only once or twice a

week, and 30% once a fortnight or less. By contrast, a recent

survey of electric bicycle owners revealed that 33% of them ride their bike at least once a day and 81% at least once a week. Because riding an electric bike is more enjoyable on hilly terrain, in strong winds, or when carrying heavy loads, users tend to make better use of them. The motor provides up to half the effort, but more regular use means more exercise for the rider.

“In terms of economy, electric bikes achieve the equivalent of about 800–2,000 miles/gallon”





No Sweat!

Sweat may not be a serious issue if you take a leisurely ride to work or your employer provides shower facilities, but an electric bike certainly helps reduce any problems in this area. Oddly enough, you won't sweat on an electric bike even if you put in the same amount of effort as you do on an ordinary bike. This is because you will be going faster, so the 'wind chill' effect is greater, keeping you cool. In hotter weather, it's possible to stay cool by increasing the output of the electric motor, enabling you to pedal a bit less.

Clean & Green

In terms of economy, electric bikes achieve the equivalent of about 800–2,000 miles/gallon (280–700 km/litre), a figure which no other commercially available vehicle – moped, motorcycle or car – can match. If you find it hard to place these numbers in real terms, just think of it like this: a 100W electric light bulb burning for an evening uses enough energy to propel an electric bike for 20 to 40 miles!

Faster Travel

Average car speeds often fall below 10mph in cities. The problem is congestion. Motorcycles get around this to some extent, but they're still confined to the road network. The great thing about an electric bike is that it can maintain a higher average speed than a bicycle while also taking advantage of the same network of cycle facilities, giving access to routes unavailable to cars and motorcycles. The result is often a faster door-to-door journey time than any other mode of transport.

Motorised, but no Red Tape

You know how it is... MOT due, log book missing, insurance costs rising year on year... The good news is the law treats electric bikes the same as ordinary ones, so there's absolutely no registration or legislation to worry about. Just enjoy yourself! ●

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Choose cycling.

To find out more about getting started, staying safe and enjoying life on a bicycle in London, visit

www.cyclelifestyle.co.uk



The Peddler

A day in the life of a London cyclist

by Adam Copeland

As a *Cycle Lifestyle* columnist, I naturally lead an impossibly glamorous showbiz existence. If it helps you visualise my life, I'm basically Kate Moss but with panniers and flabbier tits. So it won't come as any sort of surprise to regular readers (or indeed the 3am Girls) that I recently dined at Marylebone's top end brasserie, Café Luc. They've got a bike valet service, where you turn up in your inappropriately sweaty neon cycling clothes, and they lock your bike up safely inside.

Energised by the experience (but slightly baffled about how I might crudely shoe-horn it into the first paragraph of a column), I hauled myself onto my



bike with all the elegance of a foie gras goose that's learned to tuck its jeans into its socks.

Heading home, stuffed and happy, I felt the return of a familiar cycling reverie: that "I Reckon I Could Do Anything" delusion where the most ludicrous schemes suddenly seem plausible. One minute you're stopped at lights, the next the adrenaline's blowing through your hair and you genuinely believe everything's possible. To hell with it all, you

think. I'm going to jack it all in and follow my true calling. I'm going to retrain as an architect. I'm going to compete in the 2012 Olympics. I'm going to move to the country and become a humble carpenter. Damn it all, I'm even going to record the most powerfully evocative folk-rock album of the decade!

On this particular evening, as always, each fantastical plot was quickly replaced by a new one the moment I considered

the difficulties. In that one journey, I must have made at least five life-changing career moves. I wasn't likely to reach Olympic selection level in time, I realised, even if I could find a sport I was half decent at. Retraining as an architect takes 7 years; my attention span is roughly 7 seconds. I've only ever written a single song, which mainly consisted of two almost identical chords.

"On this particular evening, as always, each fantastical plot was quickly replaced by a new one the moment I considered the difficulties"

And the case against me being a carpenter is stronger still, as I remembered with a wince. Having once recklessly attempted to make my own built-in wardrobe, I asked the Polish carpenter doing some work in my flat to take a look at it. "Just out of interest," I asked him in the most casual voice I could muster, "how much would you charge for a job like this?" Not knowing the cupboard was my own unhandiwork, he sauntered up to it, narrowed his eyes and hissed, "This? This is rubbish! I charge nothing!"

So it was that yet another dream was abandoned. And so it was that, after a half hour journey through the CV of a more talented and ambitious man, I finally arrived home, leapt off the bike and thought to myself, "Do you know what? I'll probably stick with what I'm doing already". Especially if it means waiters occasionally lock up my bike while I eat their fillet steak. ●

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