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Issue 6

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Credits & Acknowledgements

This issue of Cycle Lifestyle was made possible thanks to the generous help of: Adam Copeland, Daniel Paterson, Dave Amos and Morris Lautman at Barclays Print, Dom Tyerman, Elizabeth Hunter, Hannah Lewis, Gareth Jenkins, Jane Dent, Jon Haste (kolbillustration.com), Liz Harwood, Milly Skervin, Rebecca Watts, Rose Stowell, Ry Morgan at PleaseCycle, Sam Motherwell, Ted Brown and Wendy Johnson.

Cover illustration by Sam Motherwell (sammotherwell.weebly.com)

Illustrations on pages 4 and 14 by Hannah Lewis
(www.phosphorart.com/hannah-lewis)

Published by oldspeak publishing. All prices correct at time of going to press. All content © Ben Irvine.

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Foreword

Keep warm this winter... keep cycling

This issue of Cycle Lifestyle is all about momentum. Above all, it's about carrying on cycling as the weather

gets cooler. Don't let anyone tell you it's too cold to cycle in winter. If anything, it's too cold *not* to! Just ask passengers stamping their feet and breathing fog over a disrupted train timetable.

Ask car drivers scraping a small glacier off the front windscreen while their hands turn blue. Ask grimacing, shivering crowds huddled at bus stops and wishing they'd stayed in bed.

And then ask cyclists cruising down beautiful misty streets, feeling warm and energised after a bracing start, and completely in control of their destiny – whatever the weather throws at them.

It's also about the momentum of our London Cycle Map Campaign. Every day more Londoners sign our petition for a Tube-style map and network of signed cycle routes throughout the capital. Rather than remembering hundreds of 'turn rights' and 'turn lefts', and stopping repeatedly to consult an A to Z, Londoners could one day take advantage of Simon Parker's London Cycle Map, which uses colour-coding to reveal how London's existing cycle network contains an amazing pattern: a series of direct cycle routes connecting all areas of the capital. The routes just need to be signed and marked properly – which is what our campaign is calling for. If we succeed, many cycle journeys in London could be as simple as riding on a single long straight signed coloured route. Now that's what I call momentum.

Then there's the momentum of Cycle Lifestyle itself. Now on its sixth issue, the magazine contains loads of tips on choosing a bike, buying accessories, getting started, planning a route, and staying safe. Our regular columnists are still at it, too. Gareth Jenkins, aka New Bike on the Block, writes about how he made it all the way to Wales on a bike just by asking locals the way and pressing on. He got there in the end – and his Auntie Doris was delighted with his visit. And Adam Copeland, aka The Peddler, recounts the story of how his wine-tasting exploits on a cycling holiday in France gained so much momentum he ended up horizontal.

My theme was going so well until then. Let that be a lesson. To keep warm, healthy and happy this winter, keep up the momentum: keep cycling.

Ben Irvine



From *A General Dictionary of Magic*

Iron Horse

[ahy-ern hawrs]

noun

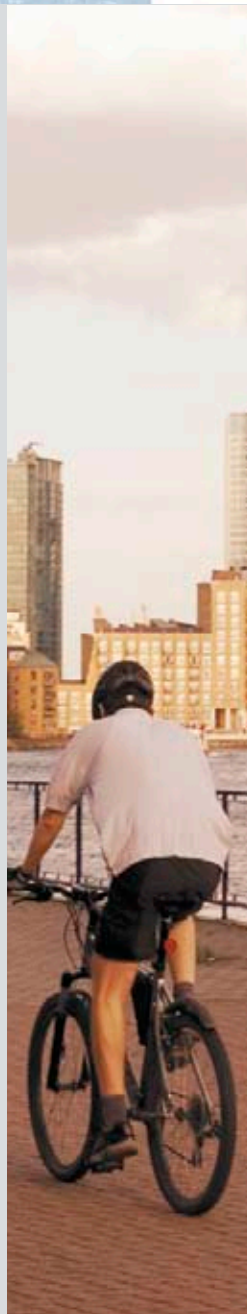
1. A mechanical stallion, mare or gelding. A contraption harnessing limbwork to whorl and feather spoke and wheel, engaging pedal and chain towards centrifugal swing, streaking blue momentum. A wheel-blessed ungulate built for crouch, for an arrowing of chin.
2. You're fuddled, wheezy. You cross the heath in a zigzag, tacking your bicycle-craft across the grassland – balance an act of pure will. I keep you aloft and afloat and ballasted, singing *Molly Malone* in strict three-four time.
3. A hobby horse, untethered. Steel-blue, or blue as quinine under UV will glow blue. I will pet and settle its aluminium spine. When my heels swivel, lift and engage – a point of departure.
4. An aeroplane, tensing its whip-spun heels from the runway, hangs like stopped breath.

by Kate Potts



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Winter Cycling

Accessories. Attitude. Achievement.

by Ry Morgan

Darker days, snow-laden pavements, colder commutes – it's no surprise that winter causes many cyclists to trade their daily ride for the car or public transport. Yet with the right equipment, attitude and perhaps a little incentivisation, winter cycling can often provide the most magical of experiences. You'll be pleasantly surprised at how little it rains, and whatever the weather does, there's nothing a cup of tea won't fix upon arrival.

Let's first explore the kit which will keep you cosy. Arriving at work in a sorry-sodden-state will soon put the brakes on your motivation levels, so some waterproof clothing should be your top priority. A wind-resistant jacket (cycling-specific or not) is essential – just make sure it's breathable, because being too hot shouldn't be the only alternative to being too cold. Gloves and hat, too, are a must on really cold days. Other items which might be helpful are a moisture-wicking base layer, over-shoes and trousers/leggings – but these are all budget-dependant. High-visibility belts, backpack covers and bibs might also aid your safety, yet it all comes down to personal preference. To be honest, I usually just throw on a thick winter jacket and woolly hat. An entirely new wardrobe is hardly necessary!

Moving on to your machine, there are two key additions: lights and mudguards. Lights are a legal requirement, front (white) and back (red) being the minimum necessary, but if you're a city commuter then an extra bit of illumination always helps – whether on your bag, clothing or helmet. Mudguards are to protect you from rogue puddles. Cheap and easy to attach, they'll keep you (and the rider behind you!) safe from splashes when negotiating those damp streets. Oh, and it wouldn't hurt to have your bike serviced before the cold kicks in – parts tend to wear out more in the wet, so giving everything a once-over should help avoid any nasty surprises.

Then there's the most important accessory of all: attitude. Getting "from bed to shed" can often be the toughest part of your entire commute. Admittedly, I'm all-too familiar with the snooze button, but an extra few minutes of shut-eye just can't compare to cruising down a desolate street as the sun comes up, with your misty breath rising over your shoulder. Stick to a routine and set everything out the night before to help circumvent petty excuses. I've even heard from keen (read: crazy) friends who sleep in their cycle gear to avoid the preamble!



Alternatively, what if you were being rewarded for cycling to work? Would the thought of extra holiday time or cash incentives make that duvet a little less enticing? Yes? I thought so. Forward-thinking companies such as GlaxoSmithKline and Forster are doing just that, winning the Unum Healthy Workplace and The Sunday Times Greenest Company awards respectively in the process. It makes a lot of sense too: increased productivity, reduced absenteeism, fewer carbon emissions, lower staff turnover, higher workplace morale – I could go on. Cycling is a "Triple Bottom Line" activity, having a positive effect on people, the planet and profits. And this is where PleaseCycle comes in.

PleaseCycle works with organisations to help them understand, encourage and reward employee cycling. Our most innovative offering is the CycleHub™ – an online portal on which staff can log journeys, learn about cycling, plan safe routes to the office, check weather updates, organise events and compete on a company leaderboard for rewards. By logging their mileage, not only can employees see their total distance, carbon saving and how they're doing compared to colleagues, they also accrue BikeMiles™ which are like Nectar points for cyclists.

BikeMiles™ can be redeemed for internal or external rewards, such as holiday time or a retail voucher. Reckitt Benckiser, one of PleaseCycle's founding clients, are taking a slightly different tack by trialling a system which makes a donation to their corporate charity (Save The Children) for every mile covered by staff. Inspiring stuff – which would certainly make me think twice about hitting the snooze button.

Anyway, those are my top tips for winter cycling. Whatever the weather, the principle benefits of cycling remain – health, happiness, lower costs and higher convenience. So when the cold creeps in this winter and you find yourself coaxed back under the covers: don your waterproof jacket, hat and gloves, and PleaseCycle.

www.pleasecycle.com

Geared up to Go!

Our guide to preparing for your first cycle ride

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 5 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.

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

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. Also avoid turning across man-hole covers or areas with lots of yellow/white lines on the road. The rain makes them especially slippery.
- ▶ Go easy on the front brake. In wintery 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.

- ▶ 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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The Road Ahead

How a London Cycle Map could lead you through the capital's streets

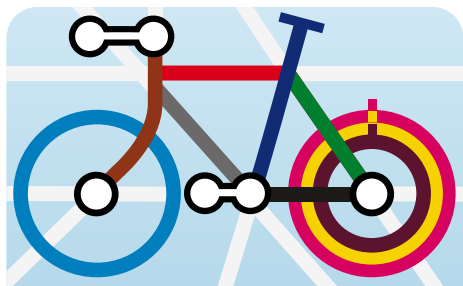
Cycle Lifestyle's London Cycle Map Campaign is calling for a single 'London Cycle Map' that's clear and easy to use and corresponds to a unified network of signed cycle routes throughout Greater London: the cycling equivalent of the London Underground Map.

You can see Simon Parker's fantastic London Cycle Map on www.cyclelifestyle.co.uk. Simon has spied an incredible pattern in the capital's tangle of cycle routes. Like a magic eye, his map shows that within the complexity there's structure: a series of long straight routes transecting London in all directions like waves, providing a direct connection between any two areas. Using Parker's map, you could cycle from virtually anywhere to anywhere in the capital by remembering no more than a few coloured routes then simply following road signs and markings.

So what would you need to see on the actual streets for the London Cycle Map to work? You'd need markings on the roads guiding you along, and visible signs wherever the routes intersect. The image on these pages shows Cycle Lifestyle's idea of what an intersection might look like.

Make this vision a reality by signing the petition for the London Cycle Map Campaign at www.petition.co.uk/london-cycle-map-campaign

Find out more at www.cyclelifestyle.co.uk



London Cycle Map Campaign

cyclelifestyle.co.uk



A 'Totem' indicating that this is an intersection of two routes. The sphere would be illuminated and should be as salient as a 'roundel' sign on a Tube Station. This would make it easy for cyclists to orient themselves on the network, easy for people to meet at junctions ("meet me at G1R2"), and easy for local pedestrians to direct cyclists to the network ("there's one of those glowing spheres at the end of this road!").

A sign pointing cyclists either straight ahead if they want to continue on the same route (R2), or left/right if they want to change onto an adjoining route (G1). There would be no more than three such changes on a typical journey using the London Cycle Map – just as easy as catching the Tube! The dot on the G1 sign which points to the right is to indicate which direction you are heading along on the route. A dot means the route is heading in a northerly or easterly direction; a lack of a dot indicates a southerly or westerly direction. Below the sign is Simon Parker's London Cycle Map. To see the map up close, visit www.cyclelifestyle.co.uk

'Breadcrumbs' are painted road markings forming a trail of coloured dots for cyclists to follow along a route. Positioned every ten metres or so, they would reassure cyclists that they are still on the correct route – and make it very hard to get lost on a bike! On darker streets, breadcrumbs could be illuminated using solar power stored up during the day.

The Best Cycling Streets in London

by Elizabeth Hunter

This issue's street isn't technically a street – it's a bridge. Waterloo Bridge. I'm sure most of you have walked across it and marvelled at the view. It feels like the central point of the city, surrounded by landmarks as far as the eye can see, in all their diverse shapes and colours. To the east, the pale dome of St Paul's sits calmly in front of that glossy thrusting upstart of the City, the Gherkin; while to the west, the white, swooping London Eye faces the dark gothic squareness of Parliament and Big Ben across the river. And on the edges of the bridge itself, the deco lines of grand old Somerset House and The Savoy shame the car-park-carbuncle of the National Theatre on the other bank. Yet even this building can look beautiful, when dusk falls and it's illuminated in pink and teal and cyan. The wide Thames connects the whole scene, changing colour with the sky and catching the falling lights at night. I never get bored of it.

The reason I think Waterloo Bridge counts as a great cycling street is that, unlike many of London's bridges, it is pleasant to cycle across. It has a little slope, for one thing, down to the IMAX on the south side. Traffic is generally light and the lanes wide, which means that at off-peak times of the day you can have the whole bridge to yourself. Though it's a great walk, I think it's an even better cycle: emerging from the crowded streets of Covent Garden or the hustle of Trafalgar Square into wide open space offers a brief interlude of water and sky and wind in the midst of the city.

Cycling across Waterloo Bridge is so joyous I sometimes make up reasons to go south just to do it.

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

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New Bike on the Block

by Gareth Jenkins

This summer I decided to book a special holiday for my wife. She works exceptionally hard throughout the year and has a very stressful job. She loves the sun and the beach and likes nothing better than having a few sips of sangria by the pool. So she was ecstatic when I told her we were going to cycle to Wales for this year's trip.

I have an Auntie Doris who remains my last living relative there, where my father is from. She lives in South Wales and hasn't met my wife, or indeed seen me for about 15 years. I've decided that cycling more is just the tip of the iceberg as far as the 'good life' is concerned, and that family should take less of a back seat. Cycling to Wales would combine the two resolutions. Brilliant, eh?

My wife has a bike: she picked it out, had a go on it, and said "Yep, I'll have this one". I handed over my battered credit card. On the way home, she described how we could now go out together on Sundays and stop for a ploughman's lunch at a riverside pub in the sunshine. We daydreamed about those balmy summer evenings cycling around. Well, that was two years ago. She's never so much as had a wobbly ride round the block on her bike since. She tells me it's because she likes "how it looks in the shed".

The good thing is, she's up for a laugh. And, as we're already married, there's a lot of paperwork involved before she can leave me. Admittedly, we both found the prospect of riding more than 200 miles a little bit daunting, to say the least. My wife hardly had any cycling experience, and the furthest I had ridden was to work and back. I'd never "done a cycling trip" or a "tour" (as I read somewhere they are called). But the time for change had come. These days I'm in the business of trying to do interesting stuff rather than sticking to the same old status quo – and, besides, Auntie Doris was expecting us.

Inundated with advice and information from well-wishers and experienced cyclists, we were given loads of literature and instructions about must-haves and equipment we should take. Many routes were planned and offered to us; the "quickest", the "easiest", or the "most recognised". We were thrust lists: Sat Naps we should use, ultra-light tents, and safety protocols. I nearly had a meltdown to be honest. I wanted to get away from the stresses and strains of

everyday life – not have them loaded back on! I wanted to unplug myself from the TV, the internet, and "the quickest" anything. I just wanted to relax... to be an adventurer.

So with all gratitude, I binned every list and suggestion. This was going to be OUR trip, not theirs. I bought a map that showed the motorways and the A and B roads, and invested in a £5 compass. I decided we would simply ask the way from people we met on the journey and, if in doubt, just head to towns and places mentioned on the map. At crossroads we would look at what option was most westerly on the compass. Simple (which is ironically the word my wife uses to describe me).



They say life is all about the journey, so we decided to echo that sentiment and try to get lost as much as possible, to talk to as many people as possible, and travel blind. I likened it to being one of those "travellers of old", who would just roll their carts into town and ask the innkeeper for a room in the Prancing Pony Inn. My wife pointed out that travellers of old didn't have mobile phones, which was a fair point.

We took a tent as back-up, so that we could pitch up in an emergency; that way we'd know there was nothing really to worry about. Well that was the theory anyway. The trip was tough, amazing, life changing, eye-opening, exciting, and, most importantly, neither of us were mortally wounded during it. So, this I say to you: Do a cycling trip. Forget all the boundaries and problems presented to you and just get on with it. Throwing caution to the wind sometimes is good for us – and you'll end up with a shed load of good yarns (and perhaps even a happy Auntie!)

Gareth is writing a book about his journey to Wales. He hopes to have it published in 2012. If you would like to register your interest in receiving an advance copy please email: newbikeontheblock@cyclelifestyle.co.uk

For now, you can read more of Gareth's yarns on cyclelifestyle.co.uk



Give it a Go

London volunteers are real Olympic Champions

by Wendy Johnson

A ge should be no barrier to taking on a new challenge, as Milly Skervin, 48, of Nottinghill Gate will testify. Milly got on a bike for the first time just two years ago and is confident it was one of the best things she has ever done.

'I never had the opportunity to cycle when I was growing up' says Milly. 'I was raised in Wolverhampton and my Dad didn't think that cycling was important for a girl so I just never learned. Now, I take a childlike joy in getting out on my bike. The best thing about it is the sense of freedom you get from cycling.'

'Initially I was nervous of traffic, but once I overcame that and realised how efficient it is to travel by bike there was no stopping me.'

'I cycle everywhere. I ride from my home in Nottinghill Gate to my job on Farringdon Road every day. Plus I go to the shops on my bike, ride to see friends or just go out for a fun ride at the weekends.'

The financial benefits of cycling are a huge help at a time when travelling in the capital is becoming more expensive. Transport for London recently announced that fares across its services – Tubes, buses, London Overground, Docklands Light Railway and trams – will increase by an average of 7 per cent from January 2012.

'Saving money was one of the reasons I started cycling', continues Milly. 'I save around £1,000 a year just on Tube fares, which was my main method of travelling before. I've done out the kitchen in my flat on the money I've saved – it's wonderful.'

'Cycling was the catalyst for me becoming a more active person. I'm now in a running club and I play competitive netball – things I would never have considered before. It's made me a much healthier person and I've dropped four dress sizes!'

This new active way of life has inspired Milly to volunteer as a Sustrans Active Travel Champion. This is a project that is supported by a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs *Inspiring Sustainable Living* grant as part of the build-up to the Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2012. As a 'Champion', Milly will be one of a group of Sustrans volunteers in and around London who will be specially trained to encourage and support people around them – whether at work, school, university or in the neighbourhood – to walk and cycle more for their daily journeys.

Milly says; 'I was really drawn to the Champion role and I've already started encouraging people at work to cycle more. On my desk I keep photos of myself before I started cycling and show them to colleagues to compare how I look now to then. It shows the difference that being regularly active can

"Saving money was one of the reasons I started cycling. I save around £1,000 a year just on Tube fares"

make. It's starting to have an effect and a couple of the other women in the office are cycling to work now, especially as our workplace offers cycle parking and shower facilities, and is in the Cycle to Work scheme.'

Rebecca Davis is coordinating the Active Travel Champions project for Sustrans. 'People like Milly are going to be a vital part of getting the most out of the Olympics', says Rebecca. 'We've got a real opportunity to be an Olympic host country that champions healthier and more active ways of travelling, both to the Games and as part of everyday life.'

'We're aiming to have around 250 people involved as Champions by the end of March 2013, so it's an ambitious project.'

'The people who have signed up so far come from a real mix of backgrounds – there are musicians and triathletes, community workers and entrepreneurs – representing a wealth of knowledge and experience. Some champions have already started brainstorming ideas to encourage more people to get about by foot or bike during London 2012.'

To find out more about how to become a Sustrans Active Travel Champion, contact Rebecca Davis on 020 7780 7201 or email at champions@sustrans.org.uk

To find out more about Sustrans' work in London, please call 020 7017 2350, email london@sustrans.org.uk or visit www.sustrans.org.uk/london



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The Peddler

A day in the life of a London cyclist

by Adam Copeland

Sometimes you just have to have a holiday. I knew my time had come recently when I was sat at work and I realised two things. Firstly, that I hadn't had a day off in nearly 18 months, and secondly, that I'd finished the internet. (I won't tell you how it ends, but as you've probably guessed, Jeeves from Ask Jeeves does end up sleeping with that milkmaid in Farmville. He's insatiable!).



So I decided to take a break from my busy work schedule of pretending to look busy at work, and flew to France with a couple of friends for a six day cycling holiday. Or more accurately, a six day eating, drinking, sleeping and occasionally hauling-ourselves-along-on-a-bike-for-a-few-miles holiday. It resembled the Tour de France about as closely as Boris Johnson resembles a lap dancer. Although maybe this isn't the place to discuss my dreams.

Anyway, the plan was simple: we would work our way along the river Loire, stopping at vineyards along the way. One of our party works in the wine industry, so it would be an education in regional wine tasting. 'Horizontal tasting', he called it, presumably because we spent so much of our time lying horizontally wondering if we really needed that fourth bottle of champagne.

As a London cyclist, the wholesome part of the holiday was a revelation: smooth, open roads, proper dedicated cycle paths, and not a single black cab driver threatening to kill you. But then on the third day, it hit us: we wouldn't be able to take any of the wine back through customs in our hand luggage. This was a potential disaster: my wine friend had picked a few bottles along the way to cherish back home. Fortunately, being a former Boy Scout I came up with a practical, selfless solution.

Yes, there was only one thing for it: we would have to drink the stuff. All apart from one bottle which, we were told, should be laid down for at least 10 years before it reached its best. Not unlike me after the trip.



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The Mayor of London Sky Ride in Barking and Dagenham



Over 7,500 people joined TV presenter Jeff Brazier, the Mayor of London's Director of 2012 Communications Daniel Ritterband, and Team Sky's Kjell Carlström and Serge Pauwels for the Mayor of London's Sky Ride Barking and Dagenham, which took place on Sunday 21 August 2011. Many more came out to watch and savour the experience as cyclists of all ages and abilities took to traffic-free streets for the chance to enjoy their local area on two wheels.

The Mayor of London, Sky and British Cycling, in partnership with Barking and Dagenham Borough Council and Transport for London (TfL), organised the 9.6km route, which took in some of the area's most prominent landmarks, including Barking Park, Mayesbrook Park, the cosmopolitan Broadway Theatre and Station Approach. It's all part of British Cycling and Sky's Sky Ride campaign, aiming to get a million more people cycling regularly by 2013.

Participants were treated to entertainment and a whole host of activities along the route and in the green open spaces of Barking Park. Highlights included Go Ride Racing for the under-16s to give them a taste of competitive racing, buskers providing a soundtrack to the event, and the 'Keep Cycling Zone' which offered hints, tips and advice on all the other fantastic ways to get back on your bike.

Sky Ride Ambassador Jeff Brazier said: "It's been a fantastic day here at The Mayor of London's Sky Ride Barking and Dagenham, with people of all ages getting back on their bikes and enjoying cycling around their local area on traffic-free streets. I just hope that everyone who has taken part today will be inspired to start cycling more regularly and continue to

have fun on two wheels. And don't forget we want you to tell us about your 'Perfect Hill to cycle down', so make sure you nominate yours at goskyride.com."

"London's true spirit shone through in Barking and Dagenham today and the strong sense of community has been overwhelming," commented Daniel Ritterband, The Mayor of London's Director of 2012 Communications. "What's more, thousands of us have rediscovered the fun of exploring London on two wheels and will be taking the first opportunity to get cycling again very soon."

Barking and Dagenham Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Education, Councillor Rocky Gill, added: "I am thrilled so many people had the opportunity to cycle in a traffic-free Barking and Dagenham and enjoy some of the

"London's true spirit shone through in Barking and Dagenham today and the strong sense of community has been overwhelming."

many wonderful parks and green spaces our borough has to offer. Cycling is a fantastic way to get around and I hope the event will have enthused more of our residents to take up the activity and explore Barking and Dagenham further."

Barking and Dagenham is one of thirteen boroughs that the Mayor and TfL awarded Biking Borough status to in 2010. The borough has pledged to put cycling at the heart of its local transport delivery plans and will receive extra support and expertise from TfL in a bid to encourage more people to cycle in the local area.

The Mayor of London's Sky Ride Barking and Dagenham is just one of the many ways local residents can get back on their bikes through the Sky Ride campaign. Sky Ride Local rides are free, local led-rides running every Sunday through the summer in and around Barking and Dagenham.

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