

# East London Cyclist

www.wheelers.org.uk

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THE NEWSLETTER FOR TOWER HAMLETS WHEELERS • LONDON CYCLING CAMPAIGN

## Bow Roundabout: Demands for action on safety

The deaths of two cyclists at Bow roundabout in less than three weeks have caused huge anger amongst cyclists and demands for radical changes in the design to improve safety at this junction.



Brian Dorling, an experienced cyclist, died on Monday 24 October whilst commuting from Hounslow to his job on the Olympic site. He was hit by a left turning tipper lorry as he came onto the roundabout at the junction with the A12.

On Friday 11<sup>th</sup> November a female cyclist was killed at the opposite corner by a tipper lorry, apparently turning left for the Blackwall tunnel, as she moved away from the lights west-bound from Stratford High Street.

**Bow roundabout is a major barrier to commuter cycling and a known hazard for cyclists' safety.** Only some of the TfL planners' recommendations were implemented for the cycle superhighway CS2 and LCC were critical at the time, requesting the opening of the highway be suspended. Cyclists are directed to the outer lane in a position of risk, and there is no option of traversing the junction on foot as pedestrian crossings do not exist.

CS2 was planned to run from Ilford through to Aldgate and the entire route was regarded as important for Olympic 'green' access. Newham Council decided against CS2 and so it stops, or starts at Bow roundabout, which straddles the borough boundaries, causing greater confusion and danger by the lack of

continuity in the paint colour and lane facilities. The blue paint here confers no safety at all. It does not indicate any priority for cyclists against motor traffic despite recent press otherwise (BBC News). The lane here is no more than a blue strip in the road. TfL's past responses to Assembly Member John Biggs on pedestrian-crossings, has made clear that the decisions of highway engineers are to keep traffic flowing and not the safety of the most vulnerable road users.

Boris Johnson is facing mounting criticism of his transport policies, Blackfriars, dangerous junctions and now Bow. The Mayor has said the Elephant and Castle roundabout was perfectly negotiable by bike so long as you kept your wits about you.

We do not believe that Brian Dorling was short of cycling wit. He had been a commuting cyclist for many years. He was killed because his route to work took him through a junction that was 'inherently dangerous'. The irony was that he worked on the Olympic site; the 'green' Olympics with spectators urged to travel by bike and on foot. TfL in response to questions about the safety of the route said that they will recommend the roundabout is not used and alternative route will be available. For commuting cyclists there is no alternative to either the roundabout or the flyover.

LCC is calling upon TfL to immediately redesign the Bow Roundabout junction, providing continuous, safe East-West cycle crossings and safe approaches and exits, and to halt work on the remaining Superhighway routes until the issues of road space reallocation and junction danger are addressed and resolved. Boris' Johnson's views can be read at: [tinyurl.com/boris-elephant](http://tinyurl.com/boris-elephant)

### **20 Wheelers – many new faces – joined 'Tour du Danger'**

– a ride around the 10 most dangerous junctions in London. Over 400 turned up on the morning of Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November to ride the junctions deemed dangerous for cyclists by TfL criteria. We went because of anger; in Tower Hamlets the deaths at Bow and the seriously injured cyclists at Dock Street/The Highways Junction on November 4th and the death of Peter McGreal in July from injuries received Pritchards Rd/ Hackney Rd E2. All were cycling to or from work, all were hit by left turning lorries.

<http://www.wheelers.org.uk/rides/2011-11-12/tour-du-danger> ■

Gerry Matthews | pic: Diamond Geezer [[diamondgeezer.blogspot.com](http://diamondgeezer.blogspot.com)]

# Ride highlights

## More rides and their full reports on our website!

**Midweek to Windsor:** The powers above clearly approved of the first official Wheelers midweek ride, as day broke with a cloudless sky and a beaming sun. 11 of us set off weaving through busy streets, over Westminster Bridge and off into the la-di-da lanes of Chelsea. For us beasts from the East, the ride was beginning to take on a distinctly genteel air as we wheeled past the Hurlingham Club, sailed over Putney Bridge and cruised into Richmond Park. Our eyes swivelled to the expensive bikes and zippy riders, completing high velocity laps around the park. Brightly attired and moving at such speed, it's hard to tell them apart from Richmond's other colourful resident — the parakeet, a sort of brash, flash avian yuppy. The Wheelers took off like rocketing pheasants and arrived panting at the portal of Hampton Court. A winding meander along the Thames then brought us to Staines, and in true Wheelers form, within an hour and a half of lunch we were ready for our next tea stop at Runnymede. Some of us chose to tuck into ice creams and crumpets, while others went off to brush up on their medieval history and investigate the site of the signing of the Magna Carta. With the thought of King John and his mutinous barons implanted in our minds, we finished the final leg of the ride in a stately fashion, gliding through Windsor's picturesque streets and beneath its looming castle. — *Annabel*

**Foulness Islands:** With a population of just 212 people boosted only by large numbers of migrating birds, there is something a little eerie about the island. The MoD use it to test military munitions and the visiting public can only gain access during the summer on the first Sunday of every month. With strict instructions to keep to the main road and not take any photos, we set off. The road was pretty much traffic free and we sped along its straight, flat surface, arriving at the visitor's centre after a swift 30 minutes. Here, some surveyed the collection of agricultural implements on show while others sidled out to the garden, clutching slices of particularly delicious homemade Victoria sponge. — *Annabel*

**Vineyard Ride:** No, not getting posh, but the prospect of wine tasting was a clever carrot to dangle in front of the Wheelers. 31 cyclists turned up with noses quivering at the thought of plentiful stops, fuelled by Kent's finest brews. Rolling out from Ashford towards Chapel Down vineyard at Small Hythe. The wines here are a bit more exclusive and allegedly held in high esteem by royalty. Rumour has it that a large order was placed for William and Kate's wedding. The Wheelers showed their approval by wobbling off with a fair few bottles, making the climb up the hill out of Small Hythe a little more interesting. — *Annabel*



**Fright Ride:** Cities take on a different personality by night and London is no exception. With Richard as ride leader, we swiftly scooted through Brick Lane, Spitalfields and into the City, stopping to hear the first of our ghoulish tales about Jack the Ripper's last victim... Winding our way through the City's labyrinth of alleyways and hidden passageways, we stopped here and there for more tales of Elizabethan ghosts, mummified remains and gruesome architectures. At the West End, we contended with a more contemporary kind of ghoul: the Saturday night reveller. Crossing Trafalgar Square, we escaped

the crowds and headed up the Mall, through the eerie darkness of Green Park, stopping for more spooky tales of plague victims and cursed trees.

Relieved to escape after singing a minute of karaoke, all 17 of us sped silently through a dimly lit Hyde Park. Emerging at Marble Arch, we had a brief stop in the middle of the traffic system to hear the history of one of London's most notorious execution spots, the Tyburn Tree. The riders silently left the bustle of central London, heading north to towards the bottom of Swain's Lane. We heard the last tale of the ride – the bizarre affair of the Highgate Vampire and the continuing rivalry between the two local “vampire hunters”. A swift ascent of London's steepest hill followed and the group reached Highgate Village, with some furious pedalling up the spooky narrow lane that bisects the rambling cemetery. Our group returned swiftly to the bright lights of Farringdon and the Tinseltown 24/7 diner, reaching the destination at 3am. — *Tomomi, Mariko & Richard*

**Bats and ISS:** Four Wheelers joined bat hunters in Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park on 20<sup>th</sup> August. Kenneth Greenway gave an illustrated talk (photos and bat poo) on types of bats and their behaviour and then we perambulated with our borrowed detectors. It is surprising how little bright light surrounds THCP and at dusk we were able to see constellations and... ‘there's a satellite!’ A knowledgeable batter suggested the large ISS as it made a west to east trajectory overhead. Wikipedia tells me it was travelling at an average speed of 17,227 mi and at an altitude of between 278 km (173 mi) and 460 km (286 mi) and that just before sunrise or after sunset are the best times to see it. — *Geff Birch* ■

## Conservatives meeting

As part of the “Movers and Shakers” campaign, Wheelers met Conservatives councillors at the Town Hall in October. Whilst none were current cyclists, the local politicians for the Isle of Dogs were very keen to help promote cycling across the borough.

Folding Bromptons were greeted with awe and wonder and presented as one way to help the busy councillors keep up with their hectic schedule. Brompton Bicycle Limited may be able to help provide this campaign with loan bikes linked to cycle training.

Local concerns were raised focused on bike security, cycling proficiency schemes in Tower Hamlets schools and the tragic deaths of cyclists. The Conservatives had high praise for the East London cyclist magazine and we agreed to make sure copies were sent to the Town Hall, as well as regular briefings by e-mail. We all agreed that through cooperation of every political group in LBTH, there could be bold improvements in cycling provision, and maybe our Mayor could exchange his Mercedes limousine for a cycle? The Conservatives gave hearty praise to their meetings with Mayor Johnson, who always arrived by bike!

Peter Golds, leader of the group, has already helped with our issues about the closure of the Greenwich foot tunnel. With Zara Emily Davis and David Snowdon, we discussed how LBTH carried out strategic development of cycling, working towards particular outcomes. Questions were asked on whether recent improvements and local campaigns were conducted on a piecemeal basis using short term funding or whether they were indeed part of a grander plan to help Tower Hamlets residents cycle more easily and safely. How was funding targeted to help cyclist from different groups? Was there any plan to help tenants store their cycles safely?

We will report back the latest findings from Mulberry Place as we make further progress. ■

Richard Patterson

## Bicycle Magic closes

Sad news reached us during September as we heard that Bicycle Magic on Greatorex St, Whitechapel was to close down.

Ex-Wheelers coordinator Gary Cummins remembers: “When Magic first opened in the early 1990s I went and made contact with them, it was called ‘Magic Bike’ back then. The owner Scott had a business partner and the shop was a specialist in high end MTBs. They even had their own MTB team, and competed at national level.

When Scott and his partner went their separate ways, Bicycle Magic emerged and was one of the few suppliers of ‘urban bikes’ in the area, i.e. bicycles that were sold with mudguards and racks. So few back then were.

Scott also employed local lads, one of whom first cut his mechanic’s teeth as a schoolboy helping in the old Wheelers’ workshop in the railway arch at Limehouse.”

Bicycle Magic was a long-time supporter of Wheelers, including providing great discounts when stocking our workshop, donating prizes for our annual quizzes and sponsoring our newsletter for the past 5 years! Good luck to Scott and his staff in whatever they get up to next. ■

Owen Person/Gary Cummins

## Jenny Jones visit...

Last month Wheelers had a visit from Jenny Jones, Green Party member at the Greater London Assembly. She is currently visiting local LCC groups to see what concerns and ideas they have.

We met her at the western end of CS3 at Royal Mint St and gave her a tour along it to the junction of Horseferry Rd and Narrow St. She was interested to hear our concerns, which included the inconsistent design of the junctions where minor roads met the Cable St route. Sometimes cyclists should give way, at others vehicles from the side have priority. This was not just the result of poor planning but because the design and implementation of cycle facilities was an afterthought, which leads to a ‘compromise’ where cyclists get the worst part of the deal.

We pointed out that this is the case across London, not just Tower Hamlets. Where CS3 meets the Tower Hill gyratory was a good example of the way cycle provision is just bolted on to an existing system with poor and confusing signage, sometimes four or five lanes of traffic to negotiate, some pavements being narrow for shared use and not clearly marked as such.

Jenny saw that the eastern end of CS3 had confusing contraflow cycle paths, which were at times too narrow, and along Horseferry Rd the cycle path runs along the wrong side of the road because the other provides parking as the council believes the convenience of motor vehicle owners to park on the same side as their home outweighs the convenience and safety of the thousands of cyclists who use this road.

We delivered her back to Tower Bridge having returned via the Shadwell and Wapping docks and the riverside path to give her a contrasting view of cycle provision in the borough. Jenny has asked us to keep in touch and to provide her with more details of problems and suggestions we may have, which she will collate with responses from other local groups and present to the GLA and the mayor. ■

David Tuckwell

# Rides and events

**Please check our web site, or call the ride leader in advance, as times/details sometimes change!**

## November

**Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> November**

### THE SIX PEAKS OF SURREY (HARD)

A hard 50 mile ride around the Surrey Hills. We'll be attempting 6 famous climbs of the area. Don't expect much flat road, but the pace will not be high and we will wait at the top of every climb for all the riders. Remember after every great climb, there's a great descent! Train from Waterloo to Epsom (return from Dorking), meet at 8am for 8:15 train. Contact: **Alex** 07813 104681

## December

**Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> December**

### MONTHLY WHEELERS MEETING

Meet at St Margarets House, 21 Old Ford Road 7.30-9.00pm - everyone welcome. Followed by a visit to a local pub from 9.15pm. Contact: **Owen**.

**Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> December**

### BICYCLE MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP

Monthly Workshop. Self-help with Dr. Bike if needed. 11am-3pm at Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road.

## January 2012

**Wednesday, 11<sup>th</sup> January**

### MONTHLY WHEELERS MEETING

- See 14<sup>th</sup> December.

**Saturday, 21<sup>st</sup> January**

### BICYCLE MAINTENANCE WORKSHOP

Monthly Workshop – 11am-3pm at Limehouse Town Hall, 646 Commercial Road.

**Please see our web site for more ride information. New rides will be added!**

## Contacts

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This Christmas, east London-based **Carry Me Bikes** is offering a 'Secret Cycling Santa service' to deliver presents to children in Tower Hamlets and Hackney.

The price for a visit from Santa and his pedalling pixies will go towards raising funds for this new social enterprise to run other socially beneficial projects in the borough. So if you know some children who'd be very excited to find that a pedal-powered Santa is visiting their house a few days before Christmas to drop off some gifts, contact [alix@carryme.org.uk](mailto:alix@carryme.org.uk) or check out their new website [www.carryme.org.uk](http://www.carryme.org.uk)

(Shhhh, don't tell the kids!)



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