

Ealing Cycling News

The LCC newsletter for Acton, Ealing, Greenford, Hanwell, Northolt, Perivale and Southall
October 2009

Cycling Super Highway

Martin Gorst

A year ago, amid a blaze of publicity the Mayor announced he was planning to build Cycling Super Highways from outer London into the centre. Well TfL have revealed the draft routes, and lo and behold one runs through Ealing. It starts outside Hanger Lane tube station, runs along the south side of the A40, turns right at White City, down Wood Lane to Shepherd's Bush, then across Shepherd's Bush Green and through back streets to Olympia. LCC central have asked us for our initial response, and whether there may be a better route.

It would be nice to say it was fantastic, but sadly, it has major problems.

1. Access. The cycle path runs along the south side of the A40, and there are only a few places where you can cross the A40 to get to the north. The A40 is, in effect, a long barrier making it difficult for anyone living north of it to access the cycle route.

2. Noise. The constant roar of traffic makes this a very unpleasant and stressful route to cycle along, hence it is not very popular. However well the route is upgraded, it will always have this drawback.

3. Slip Roads. Cyclists have to give way at slip roads where vehicles are turning off the A40. These are difficult to negotiate safely. Turning motor vehicles approach from behind the cyclist, a difficult place to

4. Shared Use. Much of the route is shared with pedestrians. There isn't enough width to make a separate cycle path without knocking down buildings or taking out a lane of highway. This means it will always have to be shared-use, which would limit cyclists' speed – hardly a super highway.

Probably the main reason for not building a cycling highway along the A40 is that there is already a much more attractive option - the Grand Union Canal towpath. This runs from Park Royal to Paddington, a more direct route into central London than the proposed dog-leg via Olympia. There is no motor traffic on the

towpath, no traffic lights or junctions, and it is level all the way. Even the most fantastic upgrade to the A40 cycle route is going to be less attractive. Relatively modest expenditure on the canal and better maintenance could make it really good.

At our meeting in September, members agreed that the Uxbridge Road would make a more suitable route for a Cycling Super Highway. On all the above counts it fares better than the A40 route. It serves several large employers, including Ealing Council, Thames Valley University, and the BBC, and is already far more popular with cyclists, so the demand

is there. A few years ago, TfL's scheme to put a tram down Uxbridge Road included plans for 1.5 metre-wide cycle lanes in both directions. This shows that it is possible to upgrade it to London Cycling Design Standards. Politically, it will be a tougher challenge. Shopkeepers will continue to want to park vehicles outside their premises. However, it is clear that this is the best cycle route into town from our borough, and at some point the council and TfL will have to face up to the challenge and make it work for cyclists. With money available for the Mayor's Cycling Super Highways, now is surely the time to do it.

Dunwich Dynamo

Gursharanjit Gill

On 4th July this year I did the Dunwich Dynamo ride for the first time. The Dynamo is a 200 km night ride from London to the lost city of Dunwich on the Suffolk Coast. It takes place on the Saturday night nearest the full moon in July. It had been on my list of cycling challenges for 5 years but I had never mustered the courage to take it on until now. I managed

to persuade a small number of friends from my workplace and Ealing LCC to do it with me. The weather was favorable as we headed out to the starting point at London Fields in Hackney. Shortly after 8pm we set off in high spirits.

We began at a good pace stopping once in Epping Forest to attach cycle lights as the sunset began to draw in. Nearing the village of Fyfield I witnessed a chain of dancing red cycle lights snaking away along the route ahead of me. They disappeared into the dwindling twilight, drawing me to follow on. A sight I'll never forget. The first 60km were quite familiar to us as we had trained on that portion of the route. I mentally marked the point of uncharted territory as we swept past the village of High Roding.

We cycled on through the darkness when near Finchingfield I was horrified to discover that we had lost a member of our group, Susan. After waiting around for a while and a few frantic phone calls later it transpired that she had

somehow missed us in the dark and was now ahead of us. She decided that it would be better if she just carried on at her own pace. But I was resolved to catch her up. So for the first time on this ride we began to overtake other riders in a

desperate bid to recover our lost colleague. But all I succeeded in doing was to push myself too hard and I began to feel ill. This forced me and my remaining companions to stop for about 15 minutes in the middle of nowhere whilst I recovered with bats flapping around our heads in the dark gloom.



Ealing LCC members Paul Killen, Gursh, and Max Wall ready for breakfast.

We carried on at a more subdued pace until we got to Great Waldingfield at about 2:50am where we could get some food at the designated rest stop. After queuing for an hour all that was available was hot soup. The pasta had run out. I fell back onto my emergency rations of sandwiches.

We left Great Waldingfield at 4:30am by which time it was getting light. Soon afterwards it started to rain a little bit. I didn't mind as it felt pleasantly cool. We cycled on through the early dawn towards the sunrise gathering pace.

At about 10:30am we finally arrived at Dunwich beach where Susan had been waiting patiently to greet us. She had arrived there at around 6:30am.

It was an amazing ride. The weather was good, the camaraderie was great and the sights were fantastic. In the end it was not as difficult as I had expected and I would certainly do this again.

AGM

We meet on the first Wednesday of every month at Cafe Grove, 65 The Grove, W5 5LL. Our next meeting, the AGM, is on Wednesday 7th October 2009, at 7.30 pm. All members welcome.

bike Milan

David Lomas

You've all heard of Velib, the Parisian bike hire scheme, and that London is getting one next year. Well this year ECC is trying out Milan's scheme bikeMi while your long-suffering Borough Coordinator works there for a few months.

The scheme is smaller than Velib and covers the centre of the city, with 102 parking stations of typically 24 slots each. (That's about 2000 bikes compared to London's 6000 and 400 stands.)

The bikes are robust shopper types, with a shiny steel basket on the front, a parking stand, hub dynamo lighting (front and rear) and a

shaft drive to the three-speed hub gears. The wheels are mountain bike size with top-quality 1.5" Schwalbe Marathon tyres: a good choice for city streets of uneven flagstones and tram lines. The front basket has a couple of prongs protruding below it, which lock the bike into the stand until booked out.

Would-be users of the service must first register and supply credit card details. This costs Euro 2.50, 6 or 36 for a day, a week or a year respectively and is possible via the web, telephone or in person at a main ATM (Azienda Trasporte Milanese) information office. For short term use, a user number and password control access to the bikes, whereas annual registration gets you the convenience of an Oyster-type card that identifies you via a reader on the console. The first 30 minutes of hire is free, with Euro 0.50 for each 30 minutes (or part) thereafter and a maximum hire of two hours. If you don't return the bike within 24 hours you are charged Euro 150.

I used the website and booked a week to start with. My user name (a six-digit number) and the four-digit password I had chosen were e-mailed back to me within minutes so off I went to find a bike.

I live near the central station, which has two racks of 24 each. There is a keypad and screen at the end of each rack. I type in my number, then my password, wait a moment and on the screen up comes... an invitation to enter my user number. I decide to walk down the main avenue to the next lot of bikes, 300m away. The rack is by the exit from the Metro and there is only one bike left. Again I try. No joy. Time to call the free enquiry line. After a while of muzak and recorded words to hold on, I'm put through. Stazione Centrale is reloading its software. OK, but I'm now at Repubblica. Yes, close, only three minutes walk away. I know that, I'm already here and can't get the one bike out. Ah,

it's awaiting maintenance. Well, it looks OK to me, but I can't argue. Never mind, there are more bikes further down the same road. And this time I'm in. I lift the bike from slot 17, park it, adjust the saddle, make a note to keep some tissues to wipe my hands in future and I'm ready for off. Hmmm, perhaps a small pump too. The hub gears work well, though with under-inflated tyres I find I cannot use third at all.

Riding is remarkably pleasant after walking through the humid soup that passes for Milan's air in August. I'm reminded how mobile you are on a bike, how freely you can discover streets and squares and buildings, and how

much ground you can cover in that free thirty minutes. These bikes can fill in gaps and greatly extend your range from (already excellent) public transport.

The basket is rather heavy and I found it affected the steering to an unnerving degree when I put my laptop in there, but you get used to it and it's enough for the short hops the service is designed for.

The designers have made use of modern communication technology. The website allows you to check where the stands are located, and which have bikes or parking spaces available. If you arrive at a stand that's full just enter your number and the screen will advise where the nearest empty one is. If no bikes are left, it will advise where the nearest one is available.

Commuting? My apartment here is across the road from the central station, and there is a stand a couple of hundred metres from my office. So, a 20-minute walk or 5 minute ride for free? Daft question. Roll on London.

Hounslow Skyride

David Eales

In the last two years, there have been two 'Freewheels' in the centre of London. To capitalise on their success, it was suggested that smaller versions could be run at up to four selected boroughs. In the end only Hounslow's bid was accepted. On the day, 60 plus riders turned up at Ealing Town Hall and another 50 at Hayes. Light traffic meant the Ealing group made good progress through the back streets of South Ealing and Brentford and we soon joined the main event at Syon Park. The Hayes group made their way along the canal through Southall – negotiating two motorbike barriers along the way. People cooperated to help lift two child trailers, with children inside, over the barriers. Despite a brief split in the Southall Group, on the whole, everything worked well, helped

along by the glorious sunshine.

The 10km traffic-free 'SkyRide' route was coned off and took in some pleasant parts of the Hounslow including Osterley and Syon Parks. Some of us did a few laps of the circuit before stopping in Syon Park to chat and generally relax. There were a number of cycling related stalls including LCC and CTC but generally it was low-key event.

A massive thanks to everyone who helped: the leaders and marshals for both rides, the route planning and organisers and of course anyone who simply turned up and rode with us.

Here's looking forward to the main London event on 20th September. (See below)

Rides...

Check our web site www.ealingcycling.org for the latest information.

Sunday 20th September 2009 Skyride

We're planning to lead two rides in to the Skyride event in central London. One leaving Ealing Town Hall, the other starting in Brentford. They will probably depart around 10am, but check our web site for details.

Sunday 4th October 2009 Green Spaces

A trip around some of the larger green spaces south of the river; Richmond Park, Wimbledon Common, Wimbledon Park and back along the river through Barnes.

Leader: Steve

Time: 10.00am prompt

Place: Ealing Town Hall Steps, New Broadway W5

Sunday 1st November 2009 RAF Museum

A return trip to the massive museum of the RAF at Hendon.

Leader: Murray

Time: 10.00am prompt

Place: Ealing Town Hall Steps, New Broadway W5

Sunday 6th December 2009 Wimbledon Common

A lovely mix of back streets and cycle paths to reach the common.

Leader: Robin

Time: 10.00am prompt

Place: Ealing Town Hall Steps, New Broadway W5

