

Spokes Summer Competition 2018

My Cycling Transformation

Q1: What was your cycling transformation?

Q2: Explain why it was so amazing for you

Judging notes: As stated on the competition entry form, the judges were asked to pay a lot of attention to the explanation of *why* the transformation was so amazing, not just what the transformation was. Judging was done anonymously as far as possible, with the judges not being told the names of entrants. Judging was by 3 members of Spokes Resources Group, one member of Spokes Planning Group, and one external judge, Councillor (and Professor) Scott Arthur, who is a member of Edinburgh City Council's Transport and Environment Committee.

First prize, Mary Higgins – Trikes at Saltersgate Special School

1. Introducing use of tricycles of all shapes and sizes throughout our school, has transformed cycling opportunities and skill development for our young people with complex learning disabilities and additional support needs.
2. I am a teacher at Saltersgate Special School in Midlothian. I'm no cycling expert, I just love being out on a bike, and so do many of the young people at our school.

Most of our students start school unable to cycle. They are not ready to cycle when their peers are learning, and it might seem that they won't ever be able to. We discovered that giving our non-cycling students of all ages (5 to 18) regular opportunities to play/cycle on tricycles, allowed them to develop key skills: turning pedals, steering, making decisions and using brakes. It also provided opportunity to keep fit and have fun.

Our adult size tricycles have become especially popular with secondary aged students. Cycling is a social opportunity, and is now seen as an important life skill in our school. Groups regularly go out along our local cycle path on a mixture of 2-wheeled and 3-wheeled cycles all together. Through this approach we have managed to get virtually the whole school on wheels.

Some parents have been amazed at the transformation in their child's skills, and have told us of how it has enabled the whole family to cycle together for the first time.

Sometimes, becoming confident on a tricycle, encourages a student (often aged 14-18) to try cycling on two-wheels. We can then help them progress by taking the pedals off a bicycle so they can start learning balance bike skills. Through this progression, involving tricycles all the way, a number of our students leave school at 18 able to cycle on two wheels, and many others confidently cycling on three.

I would never have thought that tricycles could be so much fun, and lead to such an amazing transformation.



Two students on tricycles on our local Woodburn to Whitecraig cycle path, in the tunnel under the A68

Second prize, Mark James – Bike trailers

1. What was your cycling transformation? ...

The discovery of cycle trailers and being able to live life with less need for owning a car. A bike hod, a trailer bike - to take one pedalling child, a tandem trailer bike for two children, progressing to a chariot carrying very young children, camping gear, shopping, loads of compost to flat bed trailers dedicated to load hauling – logs, big loads of seaweed, carpets and more.

2. Explain why it was so amazing for you



My very first trailer was a simple bike hod. It was great for shopping in the early days of self scanning, in the supermarket and out with a loaded bag.

My first experience towing children was of an Isla Rowntree Rann trailer in the 1990's. You could safely pull your precious cargo behind you. I had very young children that I put in a Chariot trailer. I used it for carrying large bulky gear too, like my 8 foot surfboard.



I have used a range of trailers since and have hauled a variety of large and small items.

My favourite one now is the Carry Freedom Y frame, designed in Scotland. You can get an extra long arm that enables a load of more than 5m to be carried. It is simple but very strong and very durable.

I collected hay bales for the community chicken coop. The trailer is seen below. One advantage of a trailer is I get some exercise and if I had used a vehicle there would have been a significant amount of mess.



My heaviest load so far 147kg of logs. That was extreme, and fortunately most of the journey was either flat or downhill. I had to make sure my brakes were working well. I regularly collect seaweed from the nearby beach, 2km away. It's great for the garden.



I recently bought a secondhand carpet from Zero Waste Dunbar home on the trailer.



The images show some large loads but it is good for light and bulky items too, where panniers are insufficient.

I love being able to demonstrate that you can use a bike for carrying a wide range of different stuff and to have inspired others to do the same.

Third prize, Charlie Wood – Changing oneself for ones children

1. As with nearly every aspect of my life, cycling has been transformed (for the better) by my children
2. My use of a bike to get around has grown, and continues to grow, with the kids. I did cycle a bit, mainly commuting, before they appeared but since our first outings together with the trailer our weekly mileages have steadily increased. This has been a real positive change in my lifestyle, though perhaps not in itself transformational.

The real transformation, resulting from this increased bike use, has been in my attitude to cycling and particularly my views on cycling as everyday transport both for myself and as a family. For trips within Edinburgh, and beyond as our range increases, I have changed from occasionally thinking 'maybe we should cycle' to assuming we will cycle, and being disappointed if it turns out we can't.

What started as a simple desire to get the kids active by cycling on a few journeys has resulted in an my appreciation of cycling as the most practical and enjoyable way to make so many of our local journeys. Cycling takes us a bit longer (though not always, given in Edinburgh traffic) but I've learned to make the time to allow for this and that, far from being wasted, this extra time spent outdoors, whether with the family or pootling along to work on my own, is true quality time and of real benefit to physical and mental health.

Through this, and especially when travelling with the kids, have I have developed a real appreciation for safe, preferably segregated, cycling infrastructure and for routes relatively free from traffic and the resulting noise and pollution. When deciding what to do, where to go, or how to get to somewhere we need to be, the existence of a safe and pleasant cycling route is now the key factor. So I've ended up an inadvertent advocate and activist (on a modest scale) for active travel. I've completed consultations, attended meetings and written to councillors, but I've also pedalled on Parliament, stood in Leith Walk as a human bollard and been heckled in Roseburn for not being 'local'. I wouldn't have foreseen myself doing 'this sort of thing' ten years ago and it feels like a transformation to me.

Fourth prize, Cllr Mark Brown - E-bike for work & leisure

1. Quite bluntly, I bought an e-bike!
2. Picture the scene. Twenty-odd years ago, I was cycling down Canonmills on a fairly budget priced bike. Halfway down the hill, it starts to effectively disintegrate below me. Quick thinking saved me from certain injury. And, until December last year, I hadn't been on one since.

Having been elected as an Edinburgh Councillor last year, I am in Drum Brae / Gyle, I have been to many local meetings and an impromptu chat with Graeme Hart of Hart's Cyclery led to me borrowing a Gazelle E-Bike over the festive period.

With a cycle path not far from home and a fair non-offensive route to work, I started to test the water to see if I'd be confident enough to get back in the saddle and, just perhaps, look into this further. As a semi-retired rugby prop and entering the realms of middle-aged territory, getting some exercise is to be welcomed. After a few days of saving at least an hour a day in 'dead time' by not sitting on a bus, I really started to enjoy this wee loan spell of cycling. Could I?

It took a few months to, erm, get myself in gear however I stuck by my word and in mid-April, I purchased a Gazelle Vento C7.



[ctd on next page]

Since then, I've racked up over 1,000 miles, cycle to and from work, city chambers, constituency and even get the chance to do leisurely runs too, with North Berwick being a recent trip.

During this time, unsurprisingly, I've lost weight (shedding around a stone) and gained several followers on Twitter, @Mr_Mark_Brown, who are keen to follow the affectionately named 'Horatio' on his travels!

So, overall, my transformation has been a fairly simple but effective one. A big thanks to Graeme too for his assistance and post-purchase support too.



Fifth prize, Julia Dorin – New infrastructure for NRIE commute

1. The improvements to my cycle to work – Waverley Station to New Royal Infirmary (NRIE);

- The cycle path into the back of the NRIE
- Lighting of the Innocent Railway tunnel
- Segregated lane at St Leonards

2. I live in Dunbar, East Lothian and take the train for the majority of my commute. At either end I cycle to and from the station. My journey to work in Edinburgh has been transformed by these significant improvements.

For many years the path that led down to the University of Edinburgh campus at the New Royal Infirmary at Little France consisted of steps and impractical ramps up/down each step. The option of using the path was out of the question. On the way down it was awkward and on the way up too much effort to push up the many steps.

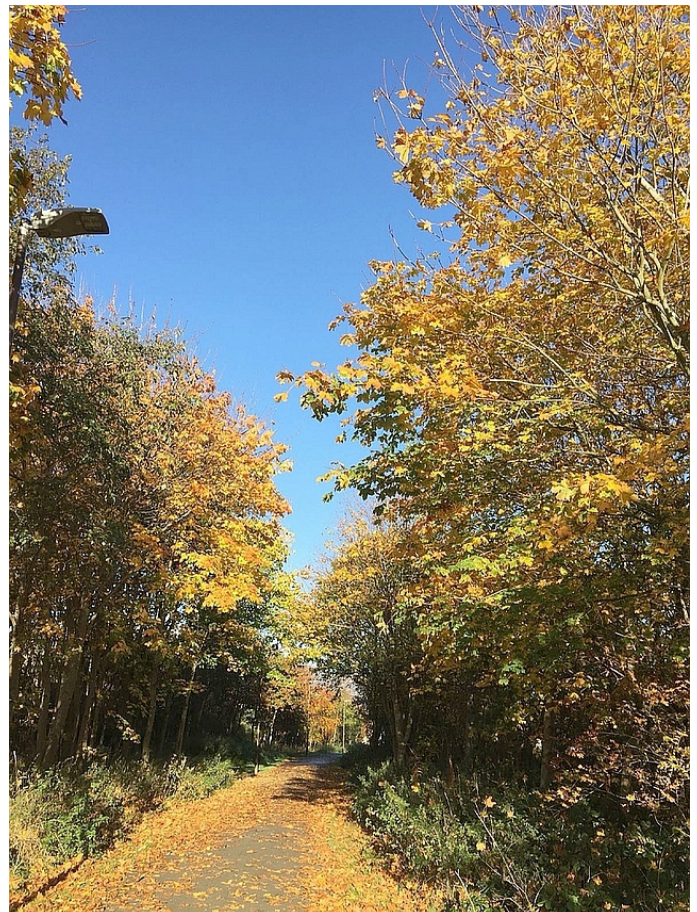
When I moved my lab from the Western General site to Little France I was not keen to cycle up to Little France as the road via Cameron toll was intimidatingly busy and the cycle path alternative an unattractive option.

However, when I did change my place of work, I found to my delight that after much campaigning, particularly by my colleague and friend Prof Lesley Forrester, the path had been upgraded to make the trip past Craigmillar Castle (see photo) and the steps replaced by a long smooth swoop down the path into the Little France campus.

When the Innocent Railway tunnel was unlit it was very dark and an intimidating place to ride during the winter homeward commute, but traversing the Cameron toll roundabout was even worse. With the addition of lighting it has made my journey feel much safer for both cyclists and pedestrians.

Finally the segregated stretch, by St Leonards police station is admittedly short but a sign of hopefully what is to become the norm for cycle routes in Edinburgh.

These significant improvements make this daily commute a practical and enjoyable route that avoids the busy city centre traffic and is always one of the highlights of my day.



Position	Entries in positions 6-14 [prizewinners]
<p>6 Alison Powell</p>	<p>Lulu, My Elephant Bike, No. 3266</p> <p>With a garage full of road and mountain bikes and no stranger to cycling, I have for years cycled around Edinburgh and beyond, going to work, towing my kids and now cycling with them. But for those short trips it never felt that easy or practical. And shopping for a family of five was impossible.</p> <p>Inspired by a variety of interesting cargo bikes on the bike paths of Edinburgh I thought it was time to look for a different way of cycling. I wanted to make cycling easy instead of jumping into the car. A bike I could hop-on and off and easily secure. Come rain or shine.</p> <p>Until now I would arrive on my bike sweaty with a rucksack, mud splattered back and front and often bruised calves from the pedals. Then there was the palaver of locking up my mountain bike. A cable lock for my quick release wheels, another to secure my frame, then removing the seat post. Not to mention, always having to wear practical cycling clothes. I wanted to change all that. Get about town with ease and in style.</p> <p>I found an article about Elephant Bikes and have not looked back.</p> <p>These bikes were originally made for the Posties at The Royal Mail. They were purpose-built for carrying heavy loads but very comfortable to ride. They have Sturmey Archer three-speed gearing and big front basket and strong back rack. As times changed and less letters and more parcels were being delivered these classic bikes were decommissioned. The Krisevac Project (a UK charity) saves these classic British-made bikes from landfill, reconditions them and gives them a new lease of life. They are known as Elephant Bikes.</p> <p>The gears are pretty high and the bike weighs nearly as much as an elephant so you need strong legs to ride it up a hill. But it is so comfortable, feels like a sofa on wheels along the bike paths. I love it. Its sturdy, reliable, highly practical and looks good too. Plus each bike has a history. My bike, known in the family as Lulu (Limited edition number 3266) was a real work horse once. Now out to pasture and living with us, she carries my shopping, school bags, scooters and anything I like, plus taxis a child on the back for short trips.</p> <p>There will only ever be five thousand Elephant Bikes ever made but the best bit for me is that for every bike sold, a bike gets sent out to Malawi to help people out there.</p> <p>My daily cycling life has been totally transformed. Lulu gets an outing most days as we 'pootle' along the streets and bike paths of Edinburgh at a leisurely pace arriving fresh, relaxed and happy.</p> 

**7
Kate
Sugden**

By a complete fluke, Kate was also 7th position prizewinner last year – and see what effect that had!!

Urban Arrow Spokes competition prize inspires family of e-bikes!!

1. My most transformative cycling experience in the last year was a day with an urban arrow electric cargo bike, which I won in last year's competition! Can I enter a spokes comp where my subject is winning a spokes comp?

2. Having never ridden a cargo bike or an e-bike, I ended our day's cycling around Edinburgh with my eyes opened to a new vision of the future. The machine was a pure pleasure to ride. The simple joy of being able to cycle my daughter to her friend's house in Leith and back without having to consider my energy levels was enough to convince me that with the right infrastructure the e-bike and cargo bike combination would be enough to negate the need for many to ever use a car within the city - a wonderfully positive vision indeed!

My subsequent enthusiasm for e-assist also spurred my somewhat listlessly retired parents into obtaining e-bikes and both have this year been enjoying long rides around Stirlingshire, the Isle of Wight and the Pyrenees instead of endless Facebook and sudoku – a definite transformation for the better!



E-bike: return to bike commuting

1. Ability to cycle and enjoy my commute again; purchase of an electric bike!

2. So, at the ripe old age of 48, I am cycling again (break of 20yrs). Why? Well I have picked up a number of back injuries, operations and what-not over the last couple of decades that made any bike ride intolerable. I was fine peddling along a flat straight, but any incline started to seriously hurt and reduce me to pushing the bike.



So I gave up cycling. Put a load of weight on, and went back to commuting in a car. Not proud of this, and every time I sat in the bypass queue, looked up and saw cyclists over the viaduct, I had a real sense of defeat and disgust at myself. I was also missing out as both kids were riding now.

So I started to look into the electric bike. What a revelation! I could pedal along the flats, and then hey presto! The motor kicks in when the horrible hills arrive. I am now the proud owner of a German tank (yes, they do weigh a little more than normal). But now I'm back on a bike and I pedal all the way to work and back along the tow path. I can now look down onto the bypass (from the viaduct) and have a smile on my face. And I can tackle any weather. I even rode it in the snow last December down the tow path and viaduct!



Now I know that a lot of people frown on these bikes, but from a safety perspective they don't go any faster than normal bikes, and they aren't any bigger. But I have lost a ton of weight, enjoyed the warmth of lycra again and feel so much better in myself. I even take the kids to their clubs during the week on our bikes. So please don't judge. Cycling is for everyone, whatever you ride.

**8
Paul
Allen**

Cycling is no longer eccentric

9 Katharine Wake

1. My cycling transformation has been a dawning realisation that by choosing to cycle for most of my journeys, I am no longer regarded as an eccentric/bolshy eco-warrior/unsafe idiot defending a hopeless one-woman corner. How do I know this? The physical evidence is undeniable – not merely the gradual upgrading of most of my old routes (muddy shortcuts reinvented as surfaced paths, dropped curbs, cycle parking, improved signage, and more) and the creation of some great new ones – but also the change in public perception towards cycling as a means of getting around.

Where once I was castigated (‘you shouldn’t be on the road, stick to the pavement!’; ‘bikes are dangerous, what are you thinking of?’) or at best tolerated as quaintly bonkers, I am now one of an accepted and growing community whose presence on and off-road is no longer seen as bizarre or confrontational. The modal shift is taking place link by link, inexorably, like the signs of the first thaw after a cold winter – and I love it!

2. I have had the secret pleasure of watching the transformation in action not just as a participant, but by observing the gradual evolution of my opposite neighbour (I’ll call him Jimmy – not his real name) from habitual car-driver to habitual cyclist.

In the beginning, Jimmy, a decent and respectable middle-aged fellow, took good care of his trusty Volvo and used it for most of his journeys. I didn’t really notice when he got a bike and assumed it would be a short-lived hobby – he didn’t seem the type. Nonetheless, Jimmy, with all the nice new gear of a novice cyclist, stuck with it, and when I remembered to notice, he was looking younger and fitter. His initial and occasional forays became more frequent, more regular, and over time his manner of cycling acquired a more practised ease.

Change on a daily basis often goes unremarked, but I realise now that Jimmy’s metamorphosis is complete – I haven’t seen the Volvo for some time (perhaps a year or two?) but if I am up early enough I see him zip off to work on his trusty bike every morning, as I do, in all weathers, as I do.

Why is this so amazing? Because Jimmy is not the only one who has changed his mindset and is clearly the better for it. If he epitomises the average, accepted, middle-of-the-road (not literally!) outlook on local transport choices, then there is great hope that the holy grail of a modal shift can indeed be achieved. If Jimmy has seen for himself that cycling is a far better way to get around, then it stands to reason that others will too. Hurrah for the Jimmies – they are inspirational!

20mph, nicer commute

1. The event that has had the most impact on my daily commute across Edinburgh is the new 20 mph speed limit on many streets across the city.

2. I hear the groans from other cyclists and road users and yes, it's true that many motorists appear to drive as fast as ever, often faster than 30 mph where this is the advertised speed limit.

However I feel that there is a greater awareness now and it will be the usual suspects who are not particularly bothered by any speed limit sign if it affects their own journey.



Because many drivers are travelling more slowly they have more time to consider safe overtaking margins, even if they then ignore their own perception of a safe passing distance. Changes in behaviour will always be incremental so acknowledging when a driver holds back (a friendly wave as you regain the safety of the kerb after overtaking a parked vehicle for example) reinforces their sense of having done the right thing. In addition, the drivers who observe the speed limit will also modify the behaviour of the drivers following them, though many road users will have experienced the 'thrill' of a racing driver overtaking a slower driver in Holyrood Park. Casualties on the road have reduced and the statistics speak for themselves, giving a graphic context for the benefit to all road users.

The latest figures show 24% fewer casualties between October and December 2017 (809 compared to 1067 in the same period the previous year). There were 103 fatal or serious casualties between October and December compared to 147 over the same period the previous year. [Edinburgh Evening News, 26/2/18]

So let's remind all the drivers that they can probably listen to another track on their favourite album, or hear a few more words of wisdom on that inspiring podcast, or even enjoy the interesting landmarks of Edinburgh which a journey at 20 mph gives them time to appreciate.

Of course we cyclists already know the benefits of travelling more slowly – after all, we still arrive, don't we.

Ageing Well, cycling skills course

1. My wife taking part in Cycling Skills - Course for Older Adults, part of the Ageing Well programme offered by Edinburgh Leisure.



2. Seeing the enthusiasm engendered in my wife who had never previously been one for physical exercise – this encouraged me to get off my backside and re-engage with cycling. Together we have both explored the many areas in our city accessible on our cycle path network and hope to go further afield in the future.

10
Elaine
Appleby

11
Colin
Inverarity

E-bike: enabling long utility trips

1. Getting an ebike – a completely transformative experience!

2. I always thought that I would be likely to get an ebike ‘sometime’, but hadn’t really reckoned on it being so soon. My mum moved into a Retirement Home in Dalkeith in January and the journey to visit her there across town from Blackhall by car was extremely tedious, guilt-inducing in terms of burning fossil-fuels for just me in the car.

It was also likely to damage my husband’s good reputation as a reliable trader as he uses our car for his business as an electrician. I wanted to leave the car available for him (picture - he approves the bike) and I had done the trip a few times by regular bike, taking the longish but flattish way round out along the Innocent Railway line following NCR1. It was do-able but I wasn’t good for much the following day!



At the Firestarter Festival, I had a go on a ‘Nihola’, one of Laid Back Bike’s trial models, and decided to hire I for a day, and then to get it. The attractive ex-trial price David Gardiner of Laidback offered me in return for promising to tell people about it certainly helped, and I’ve been telling people ever since.

I gradually found out the best ways to get to and from my mum’s, and it quite impresses the staff, fellow residents and visitors there. I don’t plan by any means to give up using my regular bike for shorter journeys and about town but I also now also use the ebike to get out to West Lothian to my monthly Reading Group meeting, and that’s great too. The computer says it has been on for 104 hours, has done a total distance of 1400 miles, and my average speed is 12.9m/h overall.

This week I did, what for me was a marathon journey using it – first down to Musselburgh to help hand out Spokes’ ‘Bike Aware’ leaflets to a PSE group, then to Dalkeith to spend an hour with mum, then to West Calder to deliver a birthday present, and home via Bellsquarry for the Reading Group meeting. And not even on the last bar of the battery (it has five, lasts me a long time but the last bar seems to go quickly). I only use the small computer for its basic info, so I don’t know how far the trip was exactly, but the best thing was that I was perfectly fine doing it despite some strong winds, and not suffering the next day.

Last, but not least, the bike has completely transformed the way I think about doing my Spokes bulletin delivery run! I usually do Area 22, which covers Cramond, East Craigs, Drumbrae, and Clermiston (ie Corstorphine Hill), and I really didn’t enjoy it, it was such a slog. Now it’s ever so much better, partly because of the bike’s sturdy kick stand, and the ‘bespoke’ pannier bag I adapted for it, into which I put the nicely ordered pile for delivery (picture) - job done!



13
Rob
Payne

Gifford Park Alley

1. Gifford Park to Clerk Street Alleyway.

2. This is amazing because it was sign-posted part of NCN Route 1, but the few times I had tried to follow it I had ended in a dead end, blocked by bins, and then by railings, to thwart my route, so then a 20 metre walk down the pavement to a pedestrian crossing and an impatient wait before the green man at last allowed me to cross.

Now, the bins are gone. I just glide, from dedicated path, around a corner, along a leafy Gifford Park, into an alley of bright murals, pausing momentarily at the crossing, and then a green cycle beckons onwards, to Holyrood and beyond.

But deep within the gaps of Google Street View, the bins still lurk. On Clerk Street, the new infrastructure is there for all to see, but nudge forward, nudge back to edge into the alleyway, and then the bins still live, for now...

<https://goo.gl/maps/qd6orvuJgiF2>



Google Street view - Gifford Park alley as it was

14
Judith
Stark

Towpath resurfacing

1. Swapping my daily commute out to the Gyle from city roads to the delightful towpath of the Union Canal, following its 2011 upgrade.

2. My boring 5 mile commute to the outskirts of [Edinburgh](#) has been transformed into a joyful ride through nature. Every day I see wildlife and watch as the seasons slowly turn.

In winter the air is cold and a mist often hangs over the glassy water. As the temperature drops the ice starts to form, first in broken sheets around Wester Hailes. Not put off by the cold, the geese swim around looking for food.

Then spring arrives bringing new life - ducklings, cygnets and an explosion of colourful growth. One spring day I counted over 30 different kinds of flower.

Then comes summer, when I often pause to snack on raspberries. I watch anxiously to see how many of the cygnets survive into adolescence.

Autumn brings new colours, rose hips in the hedgerows, the smell of moist air, and on one exciting morning for me a glimpse of deer on the path ahead.

Half an hour after leaving home I arrive, invigorated and with glowing cheeks. "Nice day for a ride", the cyclists greet each other as we lock up our bikes and head into work.



RUNNERS UP, MAP WINNERS

[in random order]

20mph speed limit

1. The 20mph speed limit

2. I really love the 20mph speed limit. For the first time it feels that I am on equal terms with the cars. You're part of the traffic not a marginal, barely tolerated, sub group. You can keep up with the flow and don't get hassled by aggressive overtaking. Its great, and taking kids on the road is way more relaxed too, the roads are calmer and you can chat, enjoy the view and feel your needs and safety have a new priority.

Driving a car too feels totally changed, it feels so very slow at 20mph, you realise that speeding in the city is over and you have to tip toe through taking better care to share the road space. It now feels really weird only slowing to 30mph in a village outside the city. Slower calmer, quieter cleaner traffic has transformed Edinburgh.

E-bike (North Berwick)

1. I was born in 1939 and grew up in York in the 1940s and 50s in a carless, cycling family, so I always took it for granted that cycling was the obvious way to get about, and mini explorations have always been a joy of mine.

When we moved to North Berwick about 12 years ago I had a bad period of Sciatica which made walking very painful, but I found to my joy that my cycling was not affected, so I enjoyed years of cycling around the byways of East Lothian, and in North Berwick most of the traffic consists of cars going slowly round and round looking for somewhere to park, so a bicycle is a great asset.

Further afield the bike travels free on the train, and gave access to many other round trips between here and Edinburgh, and from Edinburgh taking advantage of the canal towpath, the Water of Leith and the many ex-railway lines, through all manner of the nooks and crannies of the city.

However age takes its toll on energy levels, and I was doing less and less of this.

However the e-bike was being developed and for the last few years I have been watching its improvements, and watching my reducing enjoyment of the hilly bits of North Berwick and East Lothian.

Last September I bought a Volt Pulse e-bike.

2. This is definitely my cycling transformation. The power assistance irons out the hills beautifully, and the battery gives me all the range I need for my sort of day out, and anyway I can always do the last wee bit under pedal power if necessary.

I have renewed and enlarged my acquaintance with the network of lightly used roads serving the hills and hollows of the area, and, being East Lothian, the network of country cafes, as well as using the Edinburgh train to go further afield towards Edinburgh and revisit the Pencaitland railway path and the Innocent Railway path among many other minor roads and tracks.

I have had a really good time, I will have covered nearly 1000 miles in the first year, visited lots of good places, and often their cafes, and have lost about one and a half stones. It can't be bad.

Mark Beaumont inspiration

1. My Cycling Transformation came about through volunteering to support record-breaking Scottish adventurer and cyclist **Mark Beaumont** for a major cross-Scotland challenge in aid of the STV Children's Appeal.

He invited cycling fanatics (I guess that is me) to come along for the ride on **Saturday 22 September**. The coast-to-coast cycle will set off at 4.00am from near Campbeltown in **Argyll**, continue through **Loch Lomond National Park** and through Perthshire and Tayside and head for the finish line in **Aberdeen's, Duthie Park** arriving hopefully around 9.00pm— totalling a gruelling **240 miles**. This is the same distance Mark averaged daily during his epic cycle round the world in 80 days last year. Together, our team of 80 intrepid cyclists will pedal the equivalent of Mark's incredible feat – taking them 'around the world in a day'.

We have been asked to raise a minimum of £240 each for the STV Children's Appeal, which supports children and young people affected by poverty in Scotland, with the hope to raise as much as £80,000 for the charity. I have raised nearly £700 at this point and hope to reach my target in September.

2. It has been so amazing for me as it has created so many unexpected personal discoveries and new friendships on this journey.

I am already a regular and fit cyclist and fairly good with my diet, however, due to the nature of this epic event I have had to consider training and diet for something extreme that I have never done before. The focus on diet has made me change what I eat on a daily basis. I could count the number of 100 miles plus rides on 2 fingers until this year. My training has taken me along roads both new and old as I sought out long and interesting training routes.

As a result my future bank of cycling ideas has multiplied many times. New friendships and conversations have been created by this quest. People have surprised me with their generosity and interest in my plans and their shared knowledge on routes and food tips for long rides. Apart from the physical challenge my confidence and mental resilience have been developed further by pushing myself to new limits without the need to go to extremes and by gradually increasing the mileage and riding shorter distances faster to help with the monster rides to come in training and during the actual event.

I also undertook my own epic cycling test heading down to Carlisle to participate in the fantastic Ride to the Sun event from South Queensferry and linking up with friends and then cycling back overnight taking me over 200 miles ridden in 24hrs and many lessons learned, especially about sleep deprivation.

A big attraction for me, in addition to the challenge, is that it is not a race, just a feat of endurance with other like minded people. I ride to be outside and to enjoy the countryside at a steady cycling speed, including stopping for pictures, which doesn't fit racing which I occasionally do in other events!

Finally, it is great to be able to use my love of cycling for the benefit of others who are less well off in life compared to me and any family. Giving and supporting others is the most amazing feeling for me personally.



Blackford Glen

1. A horrible day transformed. This wasn't a bike transformation for a lifetime, that happened long ago, but for just one day.

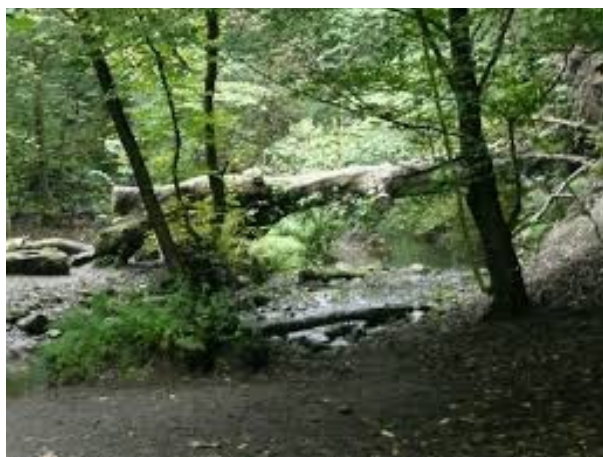
2. I need a hip replacement owing to an infection in the joint. I can still cycle, so two weeks ago when the op required me to report at 7am, I decided to ride to the Royal Infirmary from Craiglockhart, about five miles. (Sandra would take my bike home that evening after visiting me after my op.)

A lovely, quiet ride across Edinburgh at 6am but then things went pear-shaped. After a six hour wait, I reached the operating theatre to find my op cancelled. Something was contaminated. So, 3pm back on the bike with my tail between my legs. One of the worst days of my life.

But then a wonderful thing. I cycled back via the forested footpath along Blackford Glen/Hermitage of Braid and the Hermitage, a rural treasure in the middle of our capital. The stream was gurgling, the birds were singing as the sun filtered through the trees. You don't get that in a car!

I decided it was a wonderful afternoon compared with waking from an anaesthetic with a painful leg. This was a day of my life and I was going to enjoy it. We went out later to a Fringe show. A day transformed...

The new date for my op is 30 August. I'll be biking again, hopefully one-way...



Boroughloch path

1. A surprise delight for me has been the transformation of Boroughloch Walk on the Meadows.

2. Cycling between Marchmont and the Innocent Path has long been part of my life. When I first noticed another path across the Meadows had been upgraded to a segregated walking and cycling route, I was unimpressed - it is surrounded by alternative cycle routes.

I tried it once or twice for the novelty and soon realised that this was so much more than a short cut.

On one side of the path is the "Magnet Park", so often full of kids having energetic fun. On the other are tennis courts, with more kids (of all ages) having energetic fun. The open spaces all around are often full of people enjoying the outdoors. This all makes it a pleasant place to be, even when I'm just nipping through.

At the south end, the light controlled crossing of Melville Drive has been widened to make it suitable for cyclists and pedestrians. Additional push-button posts have been added, so that all of the four corners of the crossing are suitable places to request to cross, and wait to do so. And the kerbs are genuinely flush to the road!

The north end of the path initially had a corner which was too tight to ride comfortably - a muddy patch clearly attested to this. But now that has been corrected - an additional chord of non-slip surface fills the desire line.

Halfway along, another path crosses at the corner of the tennis courts. The crossing is partially occluded by a hedge, and so could be a tricky spot. A clever, but subtle, widening with a central section of setted path nudges those on bikes away from this corner, neatly giving everyone more chance to see each other. No chicanes needed!

This is one of very few paths on the Meadows that is not tree-lined. That allows me to take in the beauty of the trees along the other paths on the one hand, and an uninterrupted view of Arthur's Seat on the other.

Every time I use this path I remember how lucky I am to live in Edinburgh, and look forward to more high quality facilities making Edinburgh an even better place to live in the future.

Get bike basics right

1. Put simply, just to put into practice what I'd always known I *should* do. Four basic necessities:
 - (a) Get a bike with the right frame size, a decent range of gears, and a quality frame.
 - (b) Put the saddle as high as you can bear. At the downstroke, the leg should be fully stretched.
 - (c) Pump the tyres up to at least 60psi (6 bar), possibly more. This means less tyre is in contact with the road, hence less friction.
 - (d) Carry as little as you really, really need. Weight on the bike can make a significant difference, especially going uphill. Clear out your saddle-bag/pannier daily.

2.
(a) Right frame: I *knew* this, but somehow didn't always follow the advice; eg when in NZ for 9 years, I bought what can only be called a 'crap' bike, wrong shape of frame, too small, too few gears (a 3-speed). NZ is really hilly, at least round Wellington where I lived. I remember one hot afternoon pushing the bike, very tired, up a long hill, and being so grateful when a local farmer spontaneously rescued me by putting the bike in the back of his "ute" (utility vehicle) and taking me nearly home!

Years later, when I went back to Wellington for a visit, I had a 'proper ' bike, and sailed up the hills nae bother! So this was one 'transformation' - a lesson learnt!

(b) Correct saddle height: The increase in energy efficiency is simply astounding. People say "but I have to reach the ground with my foot!". No you don't. You just tilt the bike over, or slide forwards off the saddle. For years I rode with the saddle too low, and wondered why I wasn't keeping up with the others.

(c) Correct tyre pressure: Again, the increase in efficiency is staggering. High pressure is even more necessary if you're carrying a load. For years I rode with the tyres too soft; then one year I was touring in Germany with a fairly heavy camping load. One day a bike shop put a new tyre on for me, and pumped it to a 'proper' pressure. I couldn't believe what a difference this made!

People say "but it's so hard with all the potholes!" Yes, quite true. So get campaigning, get your Council to provide decent roads, get the Scottish Government (SG) to look after the roads we already have, instead of spending on new trunk roads! Idea: get SG to take responsibility for maintenance of *all* main roads by making them part of the national, not local, network. SG have all the money, after all; LAs are always struggling.

(d) Weight: I transform my rides by *checking daily* what I carry. Do I really need a set of lights in summer? Do I need a lock (decent locks have to be quite heavy) if the bike will be safe? Do I need a waterproof on a fine day? Do I need heavy tools for a trip to the local shops?

In sum, four basic, simple actions. They could be described, as a friend once put it, as well-known facts that not many people are aware of. Get them right, and feel the sheer pleasure of cycling as a mode of transport, the freedom of the open air!

Using panniers

1. I can't remember exactly when but it was more than ten (or is that twenty) years ago that I discovered how wonderful using panniers was for everyday cycling.

2. I had been put-off doing this earlier, reasoning that the extra weight would slow me down and ruin the sleek looks of my sporty bike (like those of its wannabe sporty and stylish rider). However, what I hadn't figured was how lovely it would be not to carry a backpack, how my upper body would be more relaxed and not get all soggy and uncomfortable. And did I really lose that much?

OK, the rack adds a tiny bit of extra weight and wind resistance but hey, is that not all the better for the "training regime". And considering the extra carrying capacity the panniers give me, many more journeys shopping or transporting things have become possible so I am cycling more. Far from hindering me, the rack and panniers have boosted my fitness and transformed my cycling comfort. They have probably not had much to do with my reduced sporting and stylistic pretensions but the passage of time has thankfully also had that result.

Fitting a rack is straightforward and the Bike Station often has a stock of second hand ones that will only cost a few pounds. Good panniers which are robust and easy to clip on and off can be pricey but are an investment which should last many years.

E-bike puts the fun back

1. Buying an ebike. Mine was collected from Electric Cycle Company, Granton Road Edinburgh, on 11th Sept 2017. To date I have done just over 3,000 miles on it saving around 2,500 car miles and including at least 3 Spokes runs. I have also lost around a stone in weight and feel an awful lot fitter.

No it's not cheating – it has enabled me to start cycling again. In August last year I had almost given up cycling. My new motto – “*When the fun stops – buy an ebike !*”



Self heading out to East Lothian

2. It put the fun back into cycling, as in my Facebook post 14th September 2017, of Cycle to Work Day Sept 13th 2017. Having signed up, there was no way I wasn't doing it and no excuse with an ebike to remove the drudgery of the hills.

Garmin route of 13th Sept 2017 ... <https://connect.garmin.com/modern/activity/1976842036/share/0>

Text of Facebook Post

Never have I been so happy to be wet on a bike. The morning was just rain - the afternoon I think was nature's attempt to re-form the Nor Loch, Princes St was a river and the Mound a torrent of debris. Not that I cared - I had just climbed Dundas St at 15mph without breaking sweat - the Mound was just as easy and Liberton Brae - bring it on !! My rucksack had a pool of water in it as did my pannier, my Goretex walking boots were soaked inside, my upper body was dry so the jacket works, the waterproof trousers maybe not so.



On Spokes ride Nov 2017

Me - I had a smile the breadth of the North Sea. In short - my first commute on an ebike!

This is an Orbea supplied by The Electric Cycle Company in Granton Road. What's not to like, powerful intuitive Bosch variable assistance system, Shimano 11spd XT mech, hydraulic discs, suspension seat post, front suspension, rack, built in lights and Dutch lock, in other words a ready to ride fast touring hybrid or trekking bike. Thank you Richard and Neill - great machine - the best £2k+ I have ever spent.

Last week I could not contemplate cycle commuting due to climbing The Queen's Park and Liberton Brae to get home. Today - I have rediscovered my love of cycling.

Oh - did I not mention - Cathie got a similar Bergamont, with a step thru frame, hub gears and Magura rim brakes.

Standing on the pedals

1. My cycling transformation in recent times has been a change in my approach to hills (the up variety), inspired by late-night gawping at the Tour de France on catch-up. I have reverted to my childhood habit of standing on the pedals to go uphill faster, and it really makes a difference. Standing on the pedals rather than sitting comfortably is also a much better way to stay balanced on rough ground going downhill – so it's a win-win in both directions.

2. ... as a middle-aged woman I thought there was little I could do to improve my speed and reduce the grunting effort of those Edinburgh hills. However, although it does require a more energetic approach, it is worth it – a vigorous burst (25 or so pedal rotations) of stand-up cycling knocks the stuffing out of most of them.

It is also amazing for me because I am so very often nearly late, and the extra oomph of standing on the pedals can whizz me to wherever I need to be in the nick of time. I may arrive a touch overheated, but red-faced puffing punctuality is almost always better than red-faced tardiness... or so I think!

SOME OTHER ENTRIES

[in random order]

Meadows to Innocent

1. The improvements between Hermits Croft and the Meadows.
2. This important route used by me and so many other cyclists has become quicker and safer. This has connected the high quality Innocent Railway route used by hundreds of commuters and leisure riders every day to the network on the Meadows and beyond. There is nothing I could criticise about these improvements. The cycle lanes on St Leonards St and Buccleuch St are high quality and easy to get on to. The crossings are set up favourably for short waits. The "Wait" lines are painted in a position which encourages cyclists not to block pedestrians. Some parking space on St Leonards St have been taken away which is an important precedent to set. All the dropped kerbs, eg the ones onto the connecting ginnel (Gifford Park) have been done with minimal bump. The whole thing is so clearly and successfully executed that you see hardly any cyclists taking that route and not using it (which sometimes happens with badly done cycling facilities).

As a small improvement, at the end of Hermits Croft, pedestrians and cyclists are pinched together for about 15 yards on a small brick path leading to the path (separated again) to E Parkside. It isn't wide enough, so pedestrians often end up walking on the scrappy grass beside the brick path, which has now been worn to a mud path. This 15 yard bit needs to be widened.

I ditched my bike computer

The ditching of my bike computer gave me a new feeling of freedom on my bike. A bike user since around 1974 I can now gauge my speed, distance travelled, energy used and general direction from experience without constantly looking down at my handlebars.

This has opened up numerous delights mainly seeing the wonderful countryside speed past and also keeping a better eye on the many dangers we cyclists have to be aware of when riding. On a recent trip to East Lothian I had more time to look at the lovely delights of the spring flowers and tree blossom, hares fighting in the fields and the many larks in ascendance - simply wonderful country.

I heartily recommend ditching bike computers - don't get me started on mobile phone/headphone use!

Puncture-proof tyres

1. Fitting puncture proof tyres after multiple punctures over the years, which had meant my main form of transport being out of action, sometimes for long periods. I now can't remember when I last had a puncture! Also I no longer have to swerve to avoid glass etc in the road-much safer!

They're more expensive than ordinary tyres (shop around) but, to me, the cost is well worth it because it means my bike's on the road whenever I want it.

2. My bicycle is now almost always available, so my journeys around Edinburgh are by the quickest, most convenient and predictable method.

No more fiddly puncture repairs and having to leave earlier to walk or take the bus when my bike is off the road!

Although puncture proof tyres can be slightly heavier than ordinary, I believe them to provide more cushioning than ordinary, a bonus in potholed city streets and on rough tracks and roads in the countryside.

A hub gear and belt drive for my bicycle

A hub gear and drive belt look queer
When they are turning around under your rear.
But d'railleur repairs once a week
For that high-pitched squeak
Is now a service only one time a year.

Moving office and finding a better cycle route to work

1. Cycling from home to work shouldn't be a post code lottery! In Edinburgh it is! The provision of good dedicated cycle paths and quiet roads is very patchy. Everyone should have an equal opportunity to cycle to work or school on a safe route - many don't and this is a social justice issue.

My biggest cycling transformation was moving offices, and my cycle to work improved. It also improved my asthma. Amazing how one small change can make a big difference

2. I'm now cycling on quieter roads away from queuing traffic and diesel fumes - the air quality has improved and the last 5 mins is across the Meadows. The Meadows oozes positivity. Cycling on car-free paths even for a short distance means I can relax, let my mind wander and enjoy the view of Arthur's Seat through the trees. I'm not the only one - I'm surrounded by lots of happy people walking and cycling across the Meadows - young and old - what a positive way to start each day! I arrive at work refreshed and ready to start the day.

What a difference from battling across dangerous junctions - and being squeezed into the gutter on busy trunk roads! It gives me a little glimpse of what cycling and walking in Edinburgh could be like - if together we take the leap to transform transport in the city!

Young people raising charity cash

1. Myself, the junior youthworkers and young people from Goodtrees Neighbourhood Centre will be completing the 45-mile sponsored cycle from Glasgow to Edinburgh on the 9th September.

2. The young people that are involved are taking positive action to raise money for our mission Christmas appeal which will help families living in poverty. So far the total is at £2408, with a target of £3500.

Provision of showers/lockers/drying facilities for cyclists at my work place

A couple of years ago, my workplace invested in providing dedicated shower, locker and drying facilities for staff, which are of particular benefit to cyclists. It has been great to have these facilities. The shower cubicles are well sized, as are the changing spaces outside the cubicles.

The drying cabinets are really useful. If I arrive in to work wet, even if it is still raining later on in the day when I am ready to leave, I at least know that I will be changing in to dried out clothing to start my cycle back, instead of having to put on damp clothing. Previous to the provision of these facilities, I recall trying to discreetly hang items of clothing around my desk during the day to try and dry out which was far from ideal! These facilities are all very well used by cyclists at my organisation.

I try to cycle to and from work daily, so these facilities do very much improve my daily cycling experience.

Meadowbank Velodrome taster session in the 2016 Festival of Cycling

It was incredible. You get to ride very fast, out in the open with no traffic near you.

After this taster session I started going along regularly. There were so many benefits:

- My fitness dramatically improved
- Really improved my bike handling, leading to me being more confident on roads
- Made new friends
- Got to spend two summers enjoying the velodrome

I've since gone on to become accredited at the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome in Glasgow and I've started going out on group rides with the Edinburgh Road Club.

Sadly though, the Meadowbank velodrome has been demolished, and it doesn't seem likely that it will get replaced any time soon. I miss my regular track cycling.

Courage to cycle

1. I cycle to work and leisurely, and have now plucked up courage to enter Sportives in the Lothians.

2. The roads are in bad condition where I live (Gilmerton). However they are vastly improved towards Newington - this encourages me to keep cycling because I know it will become safer and easier as I get nearer the city centre.