

Spokes and Me

Summer Competition 2026 - Results & Prizewinners

Competition description: www.spokes.org.uk/2026/07/spokescomp-2026

We said: *"In 2027 Spokes will be 50 years old! For our 2026 summer competition, we'd like to hear any way in which you have benefitted from Spokes being around – recently, ages ago, or through the years. ... how Spokes being around made your life that bit better, gave you enjoyment, opportunity, satisfaction, health improvement or whatever. It's not how much you have done for Spokes (if anything) - unless it made your life better in some way."*

Judging: This was done anonymously, except that a few entrants included themselves in photos. Judging was by three members of Spokes Resources Group and one from outside Resources Group, [Brendan Paddy](#), a long-standing Spokes member and also Director of Ramblers Scotland. Judges scored entries independently, and then discussed the combined scoring to determine a final agreed ordering.

Themes from entries:

- **Top theme was the value of Spokes in changing the local climate on cycling and cycling infrastructure, over many years.** For example, 3rd prizewinner **David Buchanan**, *"When I started cycling there were no cycle lanes, though plenty 'No Cycling' notices, and many councillors were very much against cycling. Whilst there is still much to do, the network of cycle lanes today has transformed the experience of cycling in Edinburgh. Without the work of Spokes it likely would not exist, or would be less extensive and functional."* 8th prizewinner **Elaine Appleby** showed how her family's cycling (children to grandchildren) changed in *each decade* from the 1960s, thanks to the developing infrastructure and Spokes influence.
- **Spokes maps were another top theme.** 7th prizewinner **Martin Gemmell** gave an incredible description of *places in West Lothian he had come across when using our map*, for example the burial place of the King of the Lothians (Cairnpapple Hill) or seats used by Albert Einstein (Blackness Castle). 5th prizewinner **Ben Bate** sent a *super picture of his Spokes maps*, including the first and the latest (see his entry below).
- **Moving to Edinburgh and discovering Spokes and/or our maps** was an unexpectedly prominent theme, mentioned in almost one-third of entries. Indeed, 2nd prizewinner **Mike Lewis** actually moved to Edinburgh in part *thanks to the Spokes Bulletin!* 12th prizewinner **Kate Thomas** was recommended to join Spokes when she moved here, and this led her to understand that *"city cycling is not just finding a route from A to B, it's also about making the city a place where cycling is safe, easy and enjoyable."*
- **Episodes from Spokes history** was another theme. 10th prizewinner **Lynda Haughney** recalled never-to-be-forgotten Cllr Brereton telling the Scotsman that *"Spokes can get lost and take its Commie friends with it."* 6th prizewinner **Chris Hill** highlighted the detailed, time-consuming and often unseen volunteer work of research, scrutiny of planning applications, etc; as well as 'big picture' episodes such as constructing the 'Pilton Path,' and Spokes assistance to related groups (such as the Bike Station)
- **Impact on individual lives** was great to see. First prizewinner **Hazel Darwin-Clements** told how winning a Spokes grant towards a cargobike revolutionised her life, not just for its intended uses, but leading to volunteer work and then to paid bike-related work. 4th prizewinner **Tracy Griffen's** business, which involved visiting many clients at home, relied on our Edinburgh map. Particularly rewarding to Spokes is that we inspired & helped people to become campaigners themselves, such as 'badgering councillors,' helping at a Spokes climate festival stall, or leafleting bikes with Spokes Bulletins. Indeed, 9th prizewinner **Oliver Brookes** titled his entry: *"Ask not what Spokes can do for you, but what you can do for Spokes."*

First prize, Hazel Darwin-Clements

Our Yellow Trike

or – How a cargobike revolutionised my life

I entered this Spokes competition in 2019, lured by the top prize of £500 off a Cargo bike. I wasn't a confident cyclist at the time. I had been pushing myself to cycle more– worried about the planet and wanting to stay fit – I even managed to take my toddler on the back of my bike, but with my second child I got stuck using the car again. A Cargo bike seemed a very expensive and unreachable dream. But when I won the prize, something tipped. Was this fate? It was the push we needed. Soon after we sold the car (for significantly less than the bike would cost) and I cycled away from the shop shaking, crossing the meadows with unsure kids in the front and my heart pounding.

I chose a yellow trike; safe, cheerful and sturdy. The kids and I soon fell in love with it and went everywhere with it. I can't imagine their childhood without it now. 7 years on and it's still part of the family – school pickups, dropping off at clubs, groceries, picking up second hand furniture finds from gumtree. We've done Cargo bike camping, Pentlands adventures, and beaches in East Lothian. I've used it for work – made shows that travel in it, given friends lifts, taken it to protests and parades.

But there have been other significant knock-on effects:

- I got a job setting up and then running the Cargo Bike Library with Porty Community Energy. I wanted everyone to have access to a bike like mine. It started out with one bike and due to the incredible efforts of the whole team is still going with a whole fleet of various wonderful bikes. We held a couple of 'Bikefests' on closed roads and started a programme of lessons and led rides. I've left now but it is still going.
- I started volunteering with the Shrub collecting food rescue from Supermarkets, because I had a bike that was perfect for this. This eventually led to me setting up a community fridge in Portobello. This is still going too, with hundreds of amazing volunteers and a huge amount of food being rescued each week.
- With my new cycling confidence, I got my instructor qualifications and started up Bikeability at our local primary school. I also initiated a school Bike Bus which now runs every Friday and grows steadily each week.

The £500 prize was made possible by an anonymous donor, and I often cycle round Edinburgh and people smile at us on our yellow clown bike. Sometimes I catch someone's eye and think "was it them?" Anyway, if they see this then I wanted to say thank you. And thank you to all the volunteers who help with Spokes and make things like this possible. You have really made a difference.



Second prize, Mike Lewis

The Spokes Bulletin changed my life!

Some time around 1985, anxious to move out of London, I came to Edinburgh for a job interview. It was a depressing affair. The company was pompous and formal, with the male employees all wearing sombre suits – matching the sombre atmosphere in the office. Afterwards, they took me to lunch at a pretentious restaurant: no vegetarian options, and cigarette smoke much in evidence. The conversation was dominated by talk of company cars, executive houses and private schools. It was a world away from my easy-going outdoorsy lifestyle and it soured me against moving to Edinburgh.

Before getting the train home, I stopped at a café, where there was a rack of leaflets and flyers. Looking for something to read, I picked up an 8-page booklet headed "Spokes Leaflet" (now called the Bulletin).

What a revelation! The main story was about local activists converting a stretch of disused railway into a DIY bike path. Another article argued in favour of on-road bike lanes (a novel idea in those days apparently). There was also an announcement of organised bike rides which anyone could join.

This was much more my style. The leaflet brought home to me not only that there were fellow cyclists in Edinburgh, but these were like-minded folk who shared my attitudes and ideals

Some months later, I decided to go freelance and so was no longer tied to London. Recalling that Spokes bulletin, my thoughts turned again to Edinburgh. And not long after that, I moved here with my family. One of the first things I did was to join Spokes. I bought bikes for my two daughters and a new one for myself. I started going out on the Sunday Spokes rides, making friends and discovering the delights of the nearby countryside.

Today, I look back on forty years in this wonderful city. My family and I have enjoyed a much better life in Scotland that we could ever have had in the South. My daughters have greatly benefited from a Scottish education. Above all, cycling has been a central part of my life. I have felt very much part of the local cycling community, and have even helped in a small way with some Spokes' campaigns.

It's not often that a single incident changes your life. But that's exactly what that chance encounter with the Spokes bulletin did for me.

SPOKES

LEAFLET 28
 SUMMER 1986
 ELECTION SPECIAL

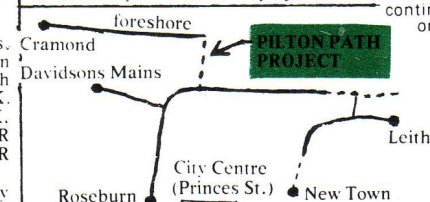
CALLING ALL WALKERS & CYCLISTS...

BUILD A PATH!

During National Bike Week, May 23-31, SPOKES proposes to build a crucial missing link in Edinburgh's walkway/cycleway network...the PILTON PATH. The path will allow walking and cycling between Roseburn, Leith, the New Town, and the Cramond/Granton foreshore with only one road crossing.

The work will be done by 100+ volunteers, supervised on-site by Britain's leading expert in path construction, John Grimshaw, together with experienced team-leaders from throughout the UK. **WE ARE RELYING ON YOUR HELP TO WORK. TO PROVIDE FREE ACCOMMODATION FOR VISITING VOLUNTEERS; AND WITH OTHER OFFERS.**

The project is enthusiastically supported by **British Rail**, who have given permission to use the



INSIDE

- **SPOKES summer rides
- ** St. Andrews ride
- ** Around Scotland

COUNCIL ELECTIONS

The Regional Council elections on 8th May are vital to cycling and transport in Lothian. In particular, it is essential that the new Council puts adequate staffing, money and determination into implementing the Grimshaw proposals for Edinburgh and Lothian. SPOKES has contacted all candidates and parties — now it's up to YOU to step up the pressure by asking questions about provision for cyclists (and pedestrians) at all public meetings held by your local candidates, or by phoning them. *cont on p.4*

SPOKES SUMMER COMPETITION

To celebrate the growing number of railway paths in the Region, SPOKES is holding a grand summer quiz. In keeping with the railway path theme there are magnificent prizes from Scotrail and the Scottish Railway Preservation Society. These are first-class return tickets for 2 between any two Scottish stations, and a railtour* for 2 to the Keighly and Worth Valley steam railway, travelling via the magnificent Settle line, steam-hauled from Carlisle.

*For details of this and other tours send SAE to Scottish Railway Preservation Society, BONESS, W. Lothian. *cont on back*

LOTHIAN GRIMSHAW DELAYS??

SPOKES is increasingly concerned about progress on the Lothian Grimshaw Report. It is over 6 months since the report was approved "in principle" by the Transportation Committee, yet there is no sign of the extra staffing needed to implement it. A recent request for an early discussion with Councillor Fraser, chairman of the Committee, was put off on the grounds that the report was being considered by the Education Committee (in connection with Safe Routes to Schools).

Owing to these delays money budgeted for the proposals is now being spent on other things. The 1985 Council transport document (TPP) planned an initial £21,000 for the 85/86 financial year, but the 1986 TPP shows this has not been spent. The railway paths budget also continues to be under-spent. Of £183,000 allocated for 1985/86, the new TPP estimates that only £133,000 will be spent.

We cannot let the Grimshaw report lie on the shelf. SPEAK TO YOUR ELECTION CANDIDATES and, after the election, VISIT YOUR NEW REGIONAL COUNCILLOR'S SURGERY (phone 229-9292 for their name, phone number and address). **ADEQUATE STAFFING IS ESSENTIAL NOW!**

Note: Copies of the Lothian Grimshaw report are on sale at the Highways Dept, 19 Market St., Edinburgh, price £7 (£8 inc. p&p). it is excellent value but, if too expensive, order it from your local public library.

THE LOTHIAN CYCLE CAMPAIGN 53 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1EJ 031-225-6906

Third prize, David Buchanan

Thank you, Spokes!

Campaigning by Spokes has resulted in massive development of cycling infrastructure in Edinburgh from essentially less than none in 1977 when cycling through the Meadows and other parks was banned (i.e. some potential off-road road cycle paths were available, but we weren't allowed to use them).

When I started cycling in the 1960s there were no cycle lanes, but there were plenty no cycling notices, and many councillors were very much against cycling.

While there is still much to do, the network of cycle lanes that we have today has completely transformed the experience of cycling in Edinburgh. It is likely that it would not exist without the work of Spokes. Certainly it would not be as extensive and functional.

This network has been of great benefit to myself, my wife, my children and grand children.

Mostly, I've been able to walk to work, but in the late 1970s I commuted by bike from Cramond to my office near the City Chambers. This involved cycling busy polluted roads, including Queensferry Road. Today it would be possible to do the same journey almost entirely off-road on pleasant well surfaced cycle paths – what a transformation of opportunity!

Retired, I now live in Colinton and occasionally I climb at Alien Rock in Newhaven. I can cycle there, mostly off-road, quicker than by bus and more pleasantly than by car. Alternatively, I can cycle by the canal to the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena at Ratho.

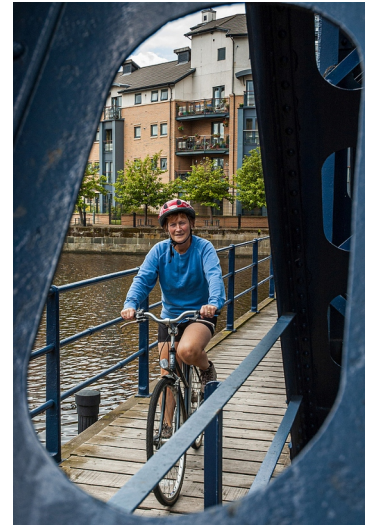
Spokes maps are a continuing revelation allowing myself and family to explore new routes not just through Edinburgh but throughout the Lothians. Sometimes in unexpected ways. A few years ago I cycled the Herring Road from Dunbar to Lauder and the East Lothian map was invaluable in helping me navigate the access tracks of the Crystal Rig wind farm.

A Spokes style map also helped me to explore around Glasgow, when I stayed at the hotel beside the Golden Jubilee Hospital, while my wife had a hip operation. I followed Cycle Route 7 off-road all the way to Balloch and back, and on another day, I cycled along the canal to Maryhill, by the River Kelvin to the Clyde and back to the hotel at Clydebank - all off-road. Spokes published the first Glasgow cycle map in 2007 (The first Edinburgh Cycle Map was published in 1987). My Glasgow map was dated 2016.

The maps were also invaluable during Covid, allowing us to determine exactly where we were allowed to cycle as the restrictions changed.

I've also enjoyed, and been informed by, the Bike Breakfasts and the public meetings organised by Spokes.

Thank you Spokes for all you have achieved in the last 50 years, and keep up the good work.



2004 : Pat in Leith



2016: Elspeth learning to cycle on the Water of Leith path at Spylaw



2020: Stuart, Isla, Pat, Fergus - Cramond Brig



2023: Elspeth at Gifford, cycled from Humble.

Fourth prize, Tracy Griffen - *My Business, Built by Bike*

I moved from Australia to Edinburgh in the late nineties. I have never driven a car and was looking for somewhere I could live and ride a bike. Auld reekie was perfect. Small and compact with back streets, scenery and lots of greenspace. And never too hot to cycle.

I loved it so much that, in 2005, I launched a fitness business from my bike. I'd cycle around Edinburgh getting clients fit with whatever would go into my pannier. This was before smartphones and Google maps confusing everyone!

I joined Spokes and got a map that I loved so much - it unlocked Edinburgh. Despite scepticism from many, my business flourished. Soon I was whizzing round Edinburgh from client to client with (relative) ease on my trusty bike,.

With the big fold-out map format I could see ALL of Edinburgh and work out the quietest route from one side of town to the other. I discovered the Roseburn Path, the Innocent Railway tunnel, cut-throughs and little ways of getting places quicker (but never by going through a red light). I owe some of the success of Griffen Fitness to Spokes. Not only did the map allow me to plan my working days - teaching aqua at Porty baths, quick ride to Stockbridge, back to Leith for lunch, then Blackhall and maybe back via a session in the West End. But also Spokes made me feel like I wasn't alone.

Many people thought it was a totally bonkers business idea, but I knew it could work, like I knew that there was an active community of cyclists in Edinburgh. Sometimes we'd chat at traffic lights, but usually my cycling was solo, purposeful and swift. I was rarely late for a PT session and it allowed me to build up enough of a client base to open up a fitness studio in Leith.

Nowadays many people use the internet to get around, but I love my collection of Spokes maps, and find them so much easier to use than a phone satnav that has me spinning in circles. Thanks to Spokes I also got involved in setting up the Edinburgh Festival of Cycling, and meeting other cyclists.

The terrain brought me to Edinburgh, Spokes help me cycle it.

A huge vote of thanks for helping me build my business on the back of a bike. From a very happy cyclist :)



Fifth prize, Ben Bate - *A better place now!*

Spokes has been important to me since I resumed cycling in the early 1980s. By then Spokes were in existence and had managed to persuade the council to allow cycling on Middle Meadow Walk – what a revolutionary idea that was at that time! Of course I joined Spokes in the 1980s and have been a member ever since.

Attempts to bring disused railways into cycling use followed and although slow progress was made the concept of safe cycling routes within the city was becoming imbedded. We lived in the south of the City, near the Meadows and enjoyed the Lemington Walk Cycleway and then Middle Meadows Walk as a way into town. This route was used daily for many years by my wife who cycled to work in the Old Town.

The routes slowly improved – the canal tow path, more paths using the old North Edinburgh rail network. The Innocent Rail tunnel a notable win for Edinburgh cyclist and Spokes. Portobello Prom and Cramond foreshore opened up for permissive cycling. What joy!

When my daughter was young, in the 1990s and 2000s getting to the North Edinburgh paths was a bit fraught but now with the Dundee Street to Roseburn link it would have been much easier.

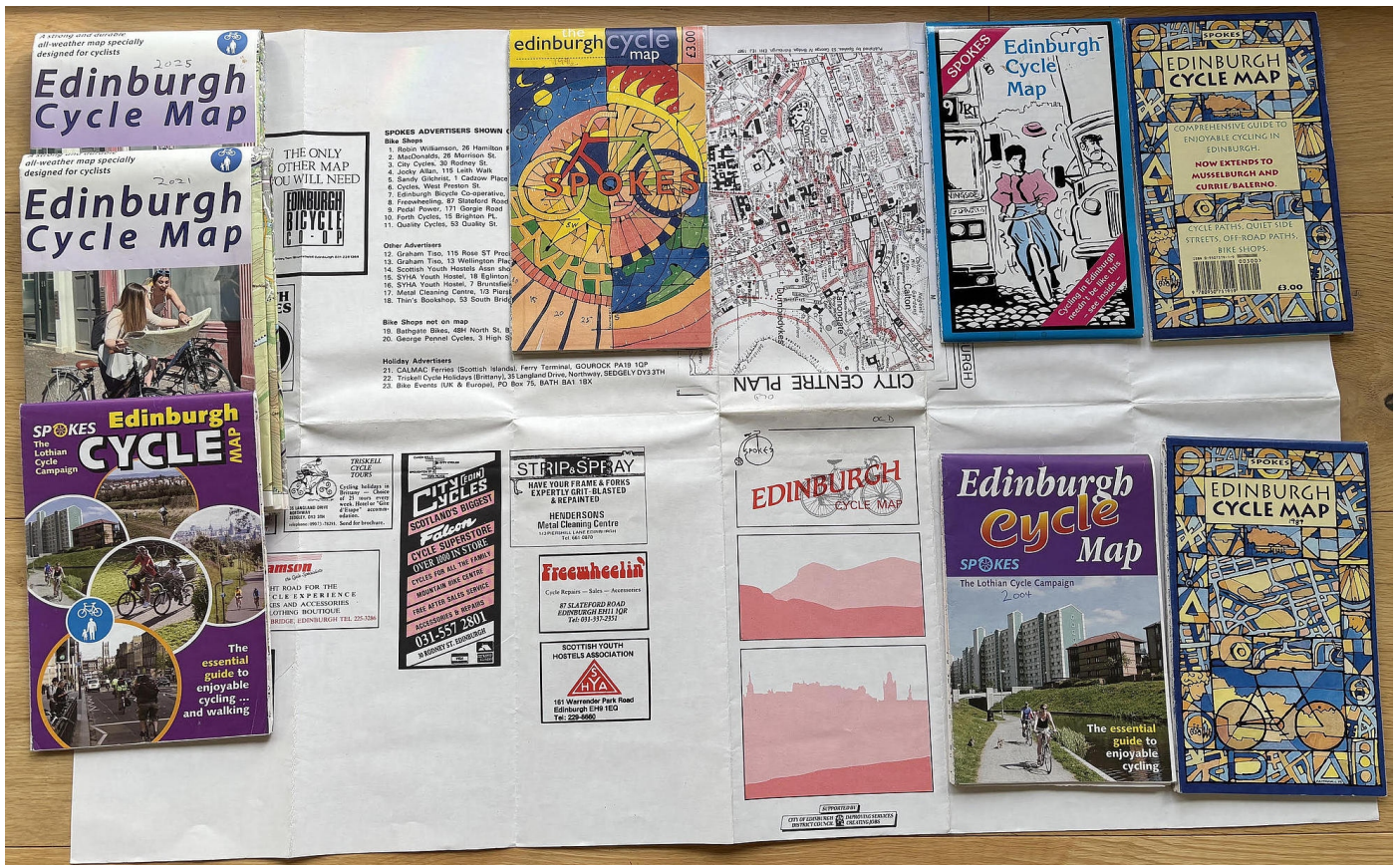
And so that we could make sense of the expanding network Spokes started to produce maps first of Edinburgh and then the Lothians. I have always owned an up-to-date set of these maps as they are so useful for planning routes.

Spokes meetings have always been of interest, for example I recall Lothian Buses being asked to speak at one such meeting and we learned how their drivers are trained to give cyclist room on the road. Very different from my very early cycling days in Dundee where buses were something to steer well clear of.

Another great feature of Spokes meetings are the election hustings where politicians looking for our vote come along and explain their attitude and policy towards cycling. In these days of social media it is great to have potential councillors, MSPs and MPs in the same room and be able to ask questions and judge them by their responses.

Perhaps the only downside of being a Spokes member was the necessity to respond to Spokes newsletters by writing to Councillors, MSPs and MPs about cycling issues in Edinburgh and Scotland. The arrival of the newsletter was pleasing for the information it gave but also because it was my chance to contribute to the cause of cycling and better provision and access for cycling in Scotland.

So, thank you Spokes and all who have contributed over the years. Still lots to do but we are in a better place now than we were in 1980.



My collection of Spokes maps of Edinburgh including the first and the latest.

Place	Entries in positions 6-16 [prizewinners]
6 Chris Hill	“It’s Complicated” First I would say, Spokes has amazed me - which is usually a life enhancer It’s not just the things achieved - some very visible, others more subtle - but the fact that it’s about to be FIFTY YEARS OLD - with a duality of public profile and a certain level of organisational opacity Spokes moves in mysterious ways - which is a profound compliment. There are those who proclaim that ‘Spokes controls the Council’. To which I can only say: “if only” Spokes is a Campaign - it’s in the title. It’s a highly successful campaign. It has always relied on a small band of dedicated people. Not always the same ones of course and (not surprisingly) few from the early days/decades In turn it has always been able to call on other volunteers to deliver leaflets (perhaps half a million by now) and write letters (and now emails) and turn out for events/demos/Breakfasts - which always attracted politicians from most parties. Note the word “volunteers”. Another amazing thing about Spokes is that it has never ‘professionalised’, never had staff - or even a paid ‘coordinator’. There has been seed money for various (external) bike projects and for things related to the making of the most important maps To enable the campaigning there’s research and being aware of what other bike groups and local authorities throughout the world are doing. Spokes has even paid for (genuine) experts to advise CEC about building a tram line. (Advice mostly ignored) Don’t blame Spokes for things in Edinburgh that ‘aren’t good enough’ - it’s tried very hard for almost 50 years. And continues to do so. Imagine Edinburgh without fifty years of Spokes. Perhaps best not to think about it... One area where Spokes has made (many) small changes over the years is due to its close scrutiny of planning applications. Much of this was done by the late, much missed, Sandy Scotland. Not every comment was heeded, but enough were to have made a difference. Spokes does ‘big picture’ campaigning - more infrastructure, less traffic etc. Wins the arguments, sees policies changed and watches slow progress some setbacks, but keeps going. I’m still amazed! My main contribution to Spokes over the years has been taking photos. If it’s black and white it’s probably mine  This one of my favourites (not just of ones I’ve done for Spokes). Of its time (yes, all men) - recognisable location, two politicians (Donald Anderson & David Martin), two Spokes people (Dave du Feu & Ewan Jeffrey) plus John Grimshaw (right) founder of Sustrans (which grew out of CycleBag in Bristol - also formed in 1977). Taken forty years ago during the creation of the Pilton Path - a joint Spokes and Sustrans project (labour by volunteers materials paid for by Lothian Regional Council). One of first bits of the North Edinburgh Path Network. The next bit will be the Powderhall Link (been coming for more than 10 years!)

What Spokes Maps Did

There are many aspects of Spokes that have been helpful to me as a cyclist. The knowledge of Spokes members, and their many campaigns and political pressurising, to name a few. But for my 2026 competition entry I would like to focus on the ever excellent Spokes Maps – the main reason for my decent knowledge of the roads of Edinburgh and indeed my passable grasp of the Lothians byways.

I will elucidate first, if that is a verb, on many interesting places I would have struggled to find without Spokes Maps. For reasons of brevity, and cussedness I shall focus mainly on West Lothian, which is possibly more interesting than some people think.

There I found the burial place of the King of The Lothians up at Cairnpapple Hill. A great climb and free entry out of season. From there you can survey his entire Kingdom and even see Fife.

Similarly, Abercorn Church has the beautiful gravestone of Ian Hamilton Finlay. Further along the foreshore Blackness Castle and the seats Albert Einstein sat on after returning from America, to find Nazism starting up - and immediately went back. The ship he sailed on was broken up at Bo'ness.

Speaking of Ian Hamilton Finlay the Spokes Map almost gets you to the back door of his house and garden. It does take you close to The Covenanters Grave and the Memorial Stone of Simon Lockhart of Lee whose ancestor returned Robert The Bruce's Heart from Spain where it had gone on holiday/crusade and the Scots suffered another embarrassing defeat at The Battle of Teba,

Other places of interest very clearly marked include The Thieves Road which was the old cattle drove road from Skye to Falkirk (Spokes generously include bits of Falkirk in the West Lothian Map) and then down to Peebles and on to England. Carllops being a spot to visit, again just off the Spokes map given that it is in the Borders. California is also on the map as is Subo's house in Whitburn. As are the sad remains of The Clubbiedean Big Puddle [see 2025 competition] and the Alpacas of Bonaly (actually they are on The Edinburgh Map).

I initially amassed my map collection by joining a queue at the good old Bike Breakfasts in June in the dear days gone by. This strategy was not always effective as sometimes I found myself 21st in the queue and only the first 20 liggers would successfully acquire a free map. Curiously, my good friend Graeme was always ahead of me in the queue and always managed to obtain a map. This outrage caused me to double down on my efforts and after a few years I had the full set. Though I perhaps resorted to buying some of them. Crazy I know. Eventually I learnt my favourite routes and started to pass on my maps to people starting out on the great pursuit of cycling around and about.

You might think this would be the end of the story and therefore, despite having a banger of an opening paragraph, this entry into the competition would start to fizzle out.

But no Dear Reader, you would be wrong, because the crafty blighters at Spokes not only updated their maps regularly they also started to bring out laminated versions. These new maps were more robust and also waterproof. Essential for days out in for example West Lothian where it often rains.

And so I began my pursuit of a full set of the laminated versions. Firstly, again by queuing at the last ever Bike Breakfast and then by entering this very competition and being rewarded with a prize of a map. I believe I may even have purchased a laminated map too!

But I shall stop now and go out cycling to find some photos to accompany my entrance in the mighty Spokes Summer Competition. I am willing to act as a guide on certain West Lothian excursions if needs be, thanks to my detailed scrutiny of The Spokes Map.



*Tearoom near Polkell, by Auchengray
- a community venture with funny hours*



Tour de Forth teddy at Bathgate Alps

8
Elaine
Appleby

Decades of thanks to SPOKES!

1960s —learning to ride without stabilisers but not allowed to pedal in local parks (chased by parky!)

1970s – riding independently in home area and at college (the adventure of taking a bike by train!)

1980s – cycling to first job within Livingston (lovely off-road paths) then from Edinburgh to Wallyford (brilliant off-road route discovered on my first Spokes map!)

1990s – teaching my children how to ride safely to swimming pool/after-school activities along routes on the amazing Spokes maps (though no practising on Portobello Prom...yet.)

2000s –coaching next generation of independent riders using great local off-road cycle network and superb Spokes maps.

2010s – travelling to most local places by bike in fit and active middle age.

2020s – using Covid-era segregated on-road lanes (glad these are retained and well-shown on Spokes maps). Grandchildren travelling in a trailer or child seat and learning to ride a balance bike.

What a lot of change in a just few decades, much due to dedicated SPOKES members and volunteers. Our family continues to benefit hugely from the development of safer cycling infrastructure, guided along the way by Spokes maps.

Thanks to one and all – and here's to the next 50 years of pedalling together.



1990s: my son, age 3



2020s: my grandson, age 3

9
Oliver
Brookes

Ask Not ...

Ask not what Spokes can do for you, but what you can do for Spokes

Forty years on I still get a stack of Spokes Bulletins to slip under brake cables of bikes in Marchmont. When I became a member I ticked boxes for photography, event organising, cartoon drawing and newsletter distribution. This was my first encounter with local, grass-roots action, with distributed responsibilities and lots of ways to get involved. And it really worked. I was clearly part of a major cycling pressure group with a well-motivated, committed community membership making things happen for cycling in Edinburgh.

I have turned to the Spokes principle many times. It was this principle that brought down Thatcher with the anti-poll tax phone trees (before www), community-based resistance and neighbourhood support groups and mass distribution of How to Stop the Sheriffs leaflets. And again with Edinburgh Road Club one of the biggest cycling clubs in Britain, its success lies in devolved power and distributed volunteer tasks.

Cycling pairs naturally with environmental movements, equality and self-reliance and Spokes is a fabulous, long-lasting model of how to achieve great things in all these areas with brilliantly organised community action.



10 Lynda Haughney	Good people, doing something Over the years, I have bought your maps, cycled across the Meadows, visited your stalls, chuckled at recurring reminders on social media of the teleological irony that you were once disparaged as Communist cranks (picture). I've attended your meetings in the Augustinian church and listening to the thoughtful winnowing of ideas and options. I've challenged my eyesight on the crowded items and minuscule font in your newsletters. What you've given me isn't small, though perhaps it's something I've not put enough into practice myself. You've taught me the power and value of patient, persistent (dogged, even), intelligent civic activism. I've seen how you put in the thought to policy that many well-meaning people just don't have the time to do, and provided a conduit for improved representation for burghers here. I've seen how you've probably done it on a shoestring. In recent years, Edinburgh has had a few thought leaders on social media, who have raised the standard of cycling discourse, but Spokes was doing it from long before, with a typewriter! always peaceful and (AFAIK!) always courteous. Full disclosure: a long time ago I was a junior office in the Council's transport team. I learnt a lot from your newsletter, and may have made sure they were lying around in the office! I appreciate the way you have pivoted to online activism without betraying your typewriter roots. I appreciate the small touches too, such as the equinoctial opening of the Meadows path, and your evolving logo, and how for some reason the first question in this competition is numbered 0! John Stuart Mill said, "<i>Bad men need nothing more to compass their ends, than that good men should look on and do nothing.</i>" Spokes is a brilliant example of good people, doing something, and Edinburgh is all the better for it.
11 David Marsh	Spokes gave hope in dark times Spokes has done <i>many</i> things to make many people's lives better, certainly in Edinburgh and the Lothians, and its influence has also extended throughout Scotland, and even beyond. For me? I grew up in an almost entirely car-based small town / large village in semi-rural Scotland, a victim of 70s/80s planning (or lack of sustainability therein). At least I was able cycle to school there (but one of very very few to do so) and there was a train to allow occasional escapes, but as a restless teenager I knew that town and transport planning could and should be much more environmentally-friendly than this (having somehow seen Netherlands planning on a TV documentary). The then recent "Green Consumer Guide" included Spokes' address, so I eagerly signed up, and the well-stuffed envelope of Spokes Bulletin back issues that I received really inspired me! Here were other like-minded people! Yes, we could foresee that a better future was possible! Yes, continual campaigning did eventually pay off! I really cannot emphasise enough how inspirational these documented grand plans, hopes, and dreams - and reports when at least some of them actually did get built "on the ground" (eg, those Meadows cycleway photos) - really were. So, when I moved to Glasgow to study, this gave me the inspiration to set about re-founding the (then) Glasgow Cycling Campaign (nowadays called Go Bike!), and, with our gradually growing members, we started to design and campaign for our own plans for how the city could become more bike-friendly, showing that real demand was there for the changes we needed to see. As a result of this, I later got a job in cycling promotion, for the Scottish Cycling Development Project, with our work then resulting in Cycling Scotland being formed (but sadly lingering student debts meant that I had to move to a different field of work). If it hadn't been for Spokes sharing its vision for a more sustainable future, highlighting that each of us is not alone in this, and showing that persistent campaigning does get results, none of this would have happened for me! (Sadly, I don't have much time/energy available for campaigning at present these days, but it is important to remember that, even if each of us can only do a little, it all helps!) Best wishes to all current and long-standing Spokes activists!

A CHANGE OF HEART

Scotsman readers will remember the May 5th letter from the Chairman of the District Council Planning Committee which ended: "SPOKES can get lost and take its Commie friends with it. Who wants a proletarian dictatorship anyway? Not me and not Marchmont. - **Ralph Brereton**, Conservative Councillor for Marchmont, and proud of it."



Councillor Brereton

There was a massive public response to Cllr. Brereton and the Scotsman (e.g. May 9th letters). So massive that Cllr. Brereton wrote again to the Scotsman saying he would look into cycle paths, and has now been in touch with SPOKES.

From Spokes Bulletin #2, Spring 1978

12
Kate
Thomas

From cycling to campaigning

I moved to Edinburgh four years ago from rural Wales, where cycling was simply part of everyday life. We cycled everywhere, and I was keen to carry on doing the same when we moved here.

Pretty much everyone who saw how enthusiastic I was about cycling recommended Spokes, so we joined soon after arriving. I'm very glad we did! Spokes has helped me see that cycling in a city isn't just about finding a good route from A to B. It's also about making the city a place where cycling is safe, easy and enjoyable – and where more people feel able to do it.

I've used Spokes maps and information to find routes around Edinburgh, but I've particularly enjoyed the campaigning side. Spokes has given me the knowledge (and perhaps the confidence!) to do a bit of campaigning myself. I now use Spokes' work as a guide when I'm informally badgering the council about cycling issues, as well as when making more formal requests. I wouldn't claim that I've transformed Edinburgh's cycling infrastructure single-handedly, but Spokes has definitely made me feel that it's worth asking, challenging and persisting.

I was also lucky enough to be a previous Spokes competition prizewinner, winning a prize that helped me buy a commuter bike. That bike has subsequently become a very well-used part of my everyday life – so it feels particularly appropriate that Spokes helped me get it!

More recently, I volunteered at the Spokes stall at the Meadows Climate Festival. I really enjoyed wandering around, chatting to people and trying to persuade them to join Spokes. It was a lovely reminder that campaigning doesn't have to be serious or worthy all the time – it can be sociable, optimistic and genuinely fun.

For me, that's probably the biggest thing Spokes has given me: the feeling that you don't just have to accept the way your city works. You can enjoy cycling in it, encourage other people to cycle, and make a small contribution towards making it better.

Four years after arriving in Edinburgh, I'm cycling regularly, I have a commuter bike that Spokes helped me get, I've volunteered on a Spokes stall, and I'm still occasionally badgering the council.

I'd say that's a pretty good return on joining Spokes!

14
Rosemary
Gray

Cycling with friends

Being a Spokes member for 40 years now and active for probably half of that has given me so much - and I've so many good memories over that time.

It was such a big part of my life for so many years from stuffing envelopes on a Saturday morning in Newington, delivering said envelopes round my local area, co-organising the first (of many) Bike Breakfasts, manning stalls at different events, shovelling whin dust on Donkey Lane, lying on the ground with my bike at the Die-in at Waverley Station, sitting in dealing with membership renewals.

If I was to select one thing that has meant most to me, it was the monthly Sunday rides from the Usher Hall. We cycled all over the place - Pencaitland, Linlithgow, Crichton, and one memorable trip over the Pentlands! We would often take our lunch and stop whenever we got hungry. I enjoyed the camaraderie and being outside in the fresh air on two wheels.

Using my bike to get around Musselburgh, I've refound that love of cycling with others in recent years - either with a friend or in a group of like-minded people, enjoying finding quieter routes, using railway paths and offroad where we can, exploring new places (cafes!), often coming into Edinburgh via Seafield and Leith or the Innocent Tunnel - using cycle friendly routes that wouldn't be there without Spokes.

Cycling with friends is special. One of my cycling friends I actually met stuffing envelopes at St Martin's in 1993/1994! It's fun to plan our next trip - often using a Spokes map!



Beautiful rides, thanks to SPOKES

I have been an active cyclist in Edinburgh for more than 30 years. During this time, I have benefited from SPOKES in many ways, directly as a cyclist and indirectly as a member of the wider community.

It is sometimes hard to appreciate the value of an organisation such as SPOKES - it's only when you travel elsewhere that you realise what it would be like without it! As an example, many a time I have been somewhere wishing that there was the equivalent of a local SPOKES map. These maps have been my companions on many cycling trips. Only recently I used both the Edinburgh and East Lothian maps to work out a route from Blackhall to Gifford which minimised the amount of time on busy roads. The maps made it easy to see how we could use various different cycle routes – the result, a most enjoyable 25-mile cycle ride, many miles of which were on various off-road cycle paths. This trip was one of many we make each year as we cycle between venues as part of the Lammermuir Festival. Each trip is carefully planned based on a detailed analysis of the relevant SPOKES maps. The Lammermuir Festival's motto is *"Beautiful music in beautiful places"* I would extend this to: *"Beautiful music in beautiful places, connected by beautiful cycle rides."*

Edinburgh and the Lothians have many good things for cycling including the old railway lines which have been adapted into cycling paths. However, there are also reasons why cycling could easily be de-prioritised – lots of hills, cobbled streets and challenging weather, so it is much to SPOKES's credit that cycling in the city and wider Lothians is flourishing and that cycling/active travel is kept on both the local authorities' and the Scottish Government's agendas.



One of many beautiful places visited, helped and inspired by a SPOKES map

As a keen cyclist, I benefit directly. I also recognise, and greatly value, the benefit to the wider-community in terms of health benefits and reduced traffic congestion.

From my perspective, SPOKES's many contributions can be summarised as follows:

- **Exemplifying** – suggesting routes, inspiring articles in SPOKES newsletters, engaging competitions.
- **Encouraging and supporting** – promoting good practices and wider understanding about cycling.
- **Enabling and informing** – SPOKES meetings have encouraged debate on key issues and campaigns have been supported by evidence both of which makes it easier for local authorities and other decision makers to take the various ideas forward.
- **Energise** – SPOKES has persuaded people to become more active cyclists and politicians / decision-makers to support cycling, including much-needed infrastructure

Looking forward, I hope SPOKES will champion some major cycling projects as well as supporting incremental improvements. As examples, it would be great if within the next 10 years there was:

- **A bridge over the railway** connecting Roseburn path with the new cycle path near Russel Road.
- **Better provision for bicycles on buses** in and around the Lothians.

It would also be fantastic if the tunnel under Scotland Street was reopened as a cycle path. This would be transformational by enabling safe and easy connections between Waverley station and the North Edinburgh Cycle network SPOKES has played a critical role in enabling the development of cycling in the Lothians over the last 50 years. I have been very fortunate to benefit and can't imagine what life would be like without it!

15 Steven Leitch	My Map to Edinburgh When I moved to Edinburgh, the city was a maze to me. I knew where I needed to get to, but I didn't yet know the streets, the shortcuts or, most importantly, which roads I would actually feel comfortable cycling on. My Spokes map changed that. Rather than seeing Edinburgh as a collection of busy roads and unfamiliar streets, I started seeing it as a network of routes to be discovered. I could study the map, work out quieter alternatives and gradually piece together my own way around this great city. The biggest difference was my journey to work from East Edinburgh. The Spokes map gave me the confidence to try cycling it. What initially felt like an intimidating commute became a route I knew, understood and felt comfortable riding. And that has meant more than simply going from A to B. I've discovered parts of Edinburgh I might have missed, become more familiar with my new home and realised just how practical cycling can be for everyday life. For someone new to Edinburgh, that sense of confidence is invaluable. The map didn't just show me where the cycle routes were — it helped me understand the city from a cyclist's perspective. Now, instead of wondering whether I can cycle somewhere, I'm more likely to think which route to take. That's what Spokes has given me: confidence to explore my new city on two wheels, and a map that helped turn Edinburgh from somewhere unfamiliar to somewhere I can confidently navigate by bike. <i>Heading into Edinburgh on Cycle Route 1, 'Innocent Railway Path' towards Holyrood Park</i>
16 Sara Dorman	Spokes support for other campaigners In 2012, a random collection of cyclists on twitter started talking about organizing a cycle protest in Edinburgh in parallel with a London mass cycle protest. This became Pedal on Parliament. Spokes itself said <i>"Not only the biggest ever cycling demonstration in Scotland, but MSPs told us it was probably the biggest ever demonstration on any subject at the Scottish Parliament."</i> For those of us organising the protest, it was significant because of our emphasis on improved infrastructure - not behavioural campaigns like the 'Nice Way Code', leisure routes, or cycle training for children. We felt that groups campaigning around cycling didn't prioritise protected infrastructure, and indeed, we felt up against the 'received wisdom' of long standing cycle campaigns. But, despite this, Spokes made a small but significant cash donation to Pedal on parliament, which enabled us to make some basic, but essential purchases, such as buying blue tabards for our marshalls. This contribution - to a group whose members were often critical of Spokes - was crucial to getting POP off the ground. But it also demonstrates Spokes' willingness to work with groups with shared aims, even if their tactics or asks were not entirely in sync. In the years since 2012, we've seen a sea change in cycle provision with protected routes now found in Edinburgh, Glasgow and many other urban areas of Scotland. And cyclists are no longer told to 'man up'. Not everything is perfect, and there's still a long way to go, but there has been an important shift - and much credit is due to POP, and its supporters, especially Spokes. I've written this entry to say thanks to Spokes - for their many contributions to cycle campaigning, their flexibility and creativity in working with the wide and diverse cycling community in Edinburgh (and beyond), and for taking a chance on us back in 2012. <i>(Written as an individual: my comments should not be taken to represent an official POP position)</i> <i>(Spokes adds: top Spokes campaigning has always been cycling infra: indeed our first big campaign was for a bike route across the Meadows. This is quite compatible with behavioural initiatives, and both feed on each other, as of course do great campaign initiatives like PoP which we are delighted to continue to support and promote).</i>

RUNNERS-UP, *entries in random order* [All get choice of a Spokes Map or Buff]

John
Molleson

Crossroads - Junction on North Meadows path



Pausing at the crossroads between Middle Meadow Walk and North Meadows Cyclepath, I marvel at the skill and tolerance of folk NOT crashing into each other at this junction... couriers, commuters, hire bike give-it-a-goers, ten-year-olds chaperoning three-year-olds, vague tourists, marathon runners, elderly couples all in the mix – and all coming out alive! There's hope for humanity.

I have been cycling in Edinburgh for more than 60 years, seen the city go from no cycle provision to committed infrastructure development. You had to be a road warrior then to take on the traffic. Now there is recognition of the place for cycling. I am clear that the headstart Edinburgh enjoyed is due to SPOKES strategic approach to campaigning. I taught all my children to cycle on the Meadows – where I had been reprimanded for cycling (also for playing a penny whistle!).

Fifty years ago I attended meetings at which a City Councillor spoke of crashes they had witnessed on Middle Meadow Walk (never substantiated) as argument against allowing cycling. SPOKES calming presented data from elsewhere, honed the argument and kept up the pressure. What we have now, a solid developing infrastructure, is the result. And bike breakfasts courtesy of the council!

Malcolm
Bruce

Cycling for Life

I have been connected to SPOKES since it started. I've been a member off and on ever since, and joined in many of the campaigns in a small way.

Unlike many relationships in life, with me and SPOKES it's always been positive!

Fed up with the danger I felt when out on my bike I wanted change, and found this was what SPOKES was about, and a lot more. SPOKES have created a climate in Edinburgh where planners and politicians know a large number of citizens (voters!) want a city where cycling is safe and easy.

I have benefitted enormously from the many improvements SPOKES has brought about, but having seen cities like Amsterdam and Copenhagen, I know we can go much much further. SPOKES knows this but politicians and planners need reminded 24/7!

This needs you and I to keep cycling, to cycle more and to keep demanding safer streets for active travel. The climate chaos we're in means we must change and drastically cut carbon emissions. As your man said, this isn't just the issue of our time, it's the issue of all time.

What better way to do this than by getting on your bike?



In the photo, taken in Holyrood Park (1978?), I'm the guy in the middle with the long hair, on a bike. The guy on my left is Ali Donaldson who became William Mysterious in the Rezillos!

**David
Gardiner**

BikeFest 2001

BikeFest was a great initiative to join up the diverse cycling community that was developing in and around the city. From memory it had stalls and a live band to create a bit of a vibe.

Took place around 2000. All this of course in the Meadows where Spokes had first campaigned to make cycling permitted (now incorporated in Outdoor Access legislation). We attended several times and daughter won a decent lock in a slow race. Was also a recumbent bike race and other things. Stalls from some local retailers (BikeTrax and Bike Coop?).

Was a sort of precursor for Pedal on Parliament as at around 2pm everyone with a bike headed on a led ride down Mound and along Princes Street with a U turn and back up. This was led by 'Gandalf' and had some cycling police escorts. Children of course cycled to the front to enjoy this liberation of the streets. Chris Hill would also be seen cycling very quickly ahead on his Moulton with a decent SLR camera recording the day. (Attached images probably came from him)

The event was in conjunction with City of Edinburgh Council but Spokes members were prominent in organising and as participants. Excuse any inaccuracies! - Just my recollection of the day or days.



A VISION OF THE FUTURE?



**Keith
Irving**

Spokes - a happier, healthier life

I moved to the North of Edinburgh in 2007 and, after moving in, found a cycle path from Victoria Park. I followed it and kept cycling. And ended up having ice cream in Aberdour and getting the train back.

The North Edinburgh cycle network is a fantastic resource and the fastest most enjoyable way to many different parts of the city. My children travelled in a bike seat to the King George V park, they learned to scooter and cycle on it, they went to nursery in a trailer for two years on it and walked along it with nursery to get even muddier in the allotments.

I 'enjoyed' the 2005 marathon route along the path towards Silverknowes, regularly cycled to Tynecastle in hope, and home in a grump, over the red bridge and Water of Leith. I cycled to work for 7 years along the paths.

The network wouldn't have been there without Spokes (and others), the city wouldn't be the same without the network and so many people have had a happier, healthier life due to the network.



The Red Bridge is installed photo: Tim Smith



Newhaven Rd Overbridge Dave Attrill on flickr

Cargo-bike taxi / chaperone weekend service!

I must admit that, without intimate knowledge of Spokes campaign / infrastructure influence, I can't be sure how much of my weekend was directly made better by Spokes, but here's my story anyway!

As 2-parent, 3-child, 0-car family, we usually split the jobs of accompanying our kids - now age 8, 11 & 13 - to various weekend destinations, via a combination of walk / independent bike / longtail cargobike / bus (with occasional reluctant accepting of lifts to parties on extreme edges of the city).

This weekend though my other half was away (cycling!) for 5 days so the taxi / chaperone service fell solely to me. (Sadly although our kids are confident cyclists, and pretty streetwise, a previous aggressive incident on the North Edinburgh Path Network has unfortunately left us feeling that our 11 & 8 year olds still needs a chaperone when cycling on those paths, even in the daytime).

But despite that we are ever so grateful for the off-road network, the infrastructure that helps it connect to on-road places & of course the Spokes maps (which were one of the first bits of 'art' we hung in my 8-year old's room when we moved back to Edinburgh 5 years ago. Not to mention the Veloe Multi purchased from Laid Back Bikes (I'm sure there must be a spokes connection?))

Anyway back to the weekend itinerary / story!

Friday afternoon - All three kids are able to safely walk home from local primary & high school. I have the afternoon off work so I taxi Child 3 on the Veloe to gymnastics at Ainslie Park (when I have to work Fridays a fellow mum rides the same route with my 8 year old and her own 7 & 5 year olds, all on their own bikes). There's nice cut through from the NEPN to AP car park but no safe route for wee ones to cycle across the busy car park to the centre entrance - a future Spokes campaign?)

Friday evening - I taxi child 2 on the back of the Veloe via NEPN to a party at Ocean Terminal (shame about that last wee missing stretch of infrastructure between the end of the path & the Terminal). Great bike parking though! Return trip 2 hours later to collect the same child.

Saturday morning - Child 1 is able to safely do their paper round in the local neighbourhood on their own bike. Child 2 spends the day with friends 'playing out' on local traffic-calmed streets. I take child 3 on the back of the Veloe to dancing in Stockbridge (sadly complete lack of cycle parking at dancing). I'm also accompanied by child 1 on their own bike and we go for a swim before picking up child 3

Saturday afternoon - Child 1 takes the bus into town and back with a friend. I walk to drop Child 3 at a local friend's house (and they take mine plus their 2, walking, down the NEPN to Victoria Park & back). I walk back to collect the same child later in the evening.

Sunday morning - I take child 3 on the Veloe down the NEPN to climbing at Alien Rock. Child 2 usually joins us for this trip (on their own bike) & I usually make them go on the pavement as cars go very fast on that stretch). Am delighted to see another child of the same age arrive on the back of an identical Veloe! Back again 90 mins later to collect same child. Ok cycle parking at Alien Rock.

Sunday afternoon - Child 1 gets the bus to & from the gym at Ainslie Park. I have a longer ride with child 2 on their own bike plus child 3 on the Veloe along the NEPN, through Roseburn Park and then the signed quiet-route to a 4 hour show-rehearsal in Corstorphine. Very grateful for the cut through at the back of the old SEPA offices - I hope this is protected if the offices get redeveloped. Sadly no cycle parking at St Anne's Church. With 4 hours to kill .. we're back on the Veloe to a spot on 'Gorgie Green Lane,' recommended for 'brambling'. Brambles in slightly short supply but there is a fully-laden apple tree so we stock up on a balance of both. I'd texted ahead so child 1 had whipped up a sponge topping for our Sunday-night-cycle-path-pudding (*pictured!*)

Conclusions - The city definitely feels more bike-friendly than when I grew up here as a child. Not least because we're not quite such odd-ones-out for being a 'cycling family' - although I do think we still have a long way as a city (and society) to go on that front.

I honestly think when you're doing a lot of short trip-chaining, if there is decent infrastructure & bike parking, then surely life must be easier by bike? I also got 20,000 'steps' in on Sunday alone, so that immediately solves the problem of how a busy parent fits in time for exercise. **Plus - how many drivers get to go home with a free Sunday-night-cycle-path-pudding?!?**



[*Spokes Note:* We are usually fairly generous to entries that bend the rules slightly, but this one was way over our recommended length, so has been shortened fairly drastically. The original is available on request and includes even more suggestions for local infrastructure improvements!]

Malcolm
Bruce

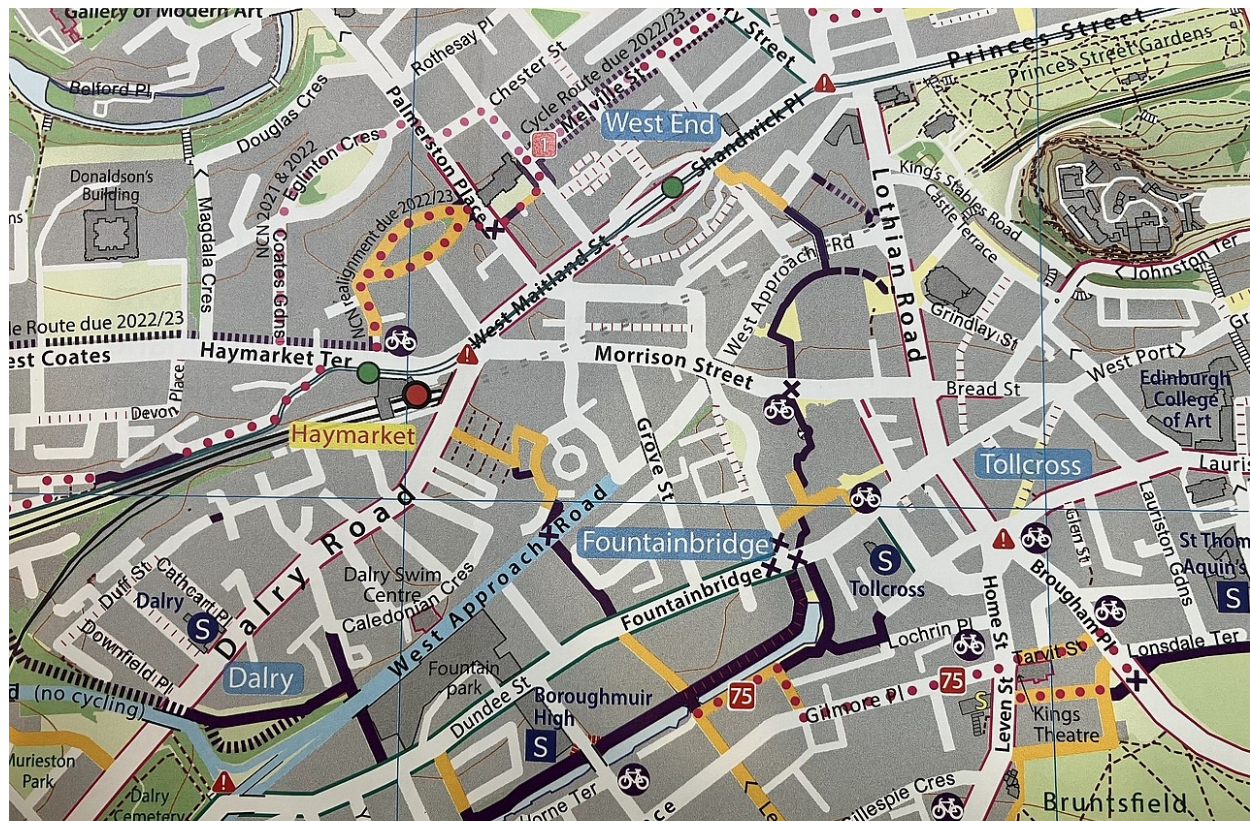
Happy Trails to You

*I'd checked online, the North Edinburgh Path was clear.
Putting on the helmet I'd decided to wear, I took my bike out of the street store and set off.
I'd brought my cycling map, Graeme wanted to go to a bike shop in part of town new to me.
He's thinking of buying a cargo bike. . . .
Rejoining the road in Leith, we waved to a Lothian bus driver who gave way to let us out.
Deciding to pick up shopping on the way we parked our bikes on the racks right by the door of Aldi.
We caught up as we went round.
"Been to the Lanterne Rouge recently?"
"Yeah, went there with Gembo last week".
"Le patron still supporting Greenock Morton?"
"Aye!"
Later, after trying the cargo bike (and a recumbent!) we found the cycle path to take us back to Leith.
"Tram?" I said when we got there.
"Is Paris a city!", he replied.
Gliding up the Walk Graeme said he was getting off at the West End to go and look in the Bike Station for a bike for his granddaughter Ailsa.
Me, the tram to Murrayfield and cruised home with my messages on the world-class Roseburn Path
Q: WHAT HAVE SPOKES EVER DONE FOR ME?
A: ALL OF THE ABOVE (AND MUCH MORE)! THINGS HAPPEN BECAUSE SPOKES HELP CREATE THE RIGHT, BIKE-CONSCIOUS ENVIRONMENT!*

Melissa
Branzburg

Maps unlock a new city

We moved to Edinburgh from London a few years ago, with a cargo bike and no car. With our bike as our main form of transport, it was really daunting working out new routes that were safe for my then 10 year old to cycle alongside. Then I got wind of the Spokes maps - and what a game changer!
It had been so long since I had found a paper map so useful, with its impressive key and deep details. It became a ritual, laying out the map, studying the points, and learning our new home. Now we don't need it as much, having memorised our routes, but so grateful for the lift it gave us and it remains my favourite recommendation to every friend thinking of picking up a bike or for a walk.



The picture shows a key part of one of our routes, also saved to help friends get to the Meadows

**Jackie
Jack**

Graffiti Rides

I commute around Edinburgh everyday as I find car traffic congestion challenging.
My favourite bike rides are around various Graffiti sites in Edinburgh, many on the walkway network..
I've attached an example of the Graffiti in Leith between the Kirkgate and the high flats.

*Pedalling high past the crags and the scree,
With views of the city right down to the sea.
Through Gorse and Heather,
In wild Edinburgh weather,
No traffic, just bike paths and free!*



**Ken
Morrison**

What if Spokes wasn't around?

I really didn't think I was going to enter the competition this year. I have entered a few times over the years, and won more than my fair share of maps and vouchers, my favorite being a pair of free train tickets anywhere in Scotland. We went to Mallaig with bikes for the weekend. It was before "Bike Packing" became a thing....back then, you put your saddlebag on your mountain bike.



Happy memories, not sure I ever said thanks. But this year? Not a single idea came into my mind.
Then I went to a funeral.

It wasn't someone I'd been particularly close to: but someone who had always been around, in the background, trying to make the world a better place in his own way. He was also someone who'd help people out if he could, and because he had such an interest in everyone, he could make links, and get things done. The slogan "Think Global, Act Local" could have been invented for him. As the years passed, perhaps he stayed analogue as most of the world went digital. But he was always around, holding threads, making connections. A bit like a benign grandfather, proud of what he had helped create, but never resting on his laurels. He was never looking for fight either; when conflicts came up, he could always understand where people were coming at it from, and remind them of their better selves without falling out.

The world suddenly seemed a poorer place without him, though I'm not sure I ever appreciated him while he was around, or thanked him.

So, without further ado, thanks Spokes.

Thanks for sharing the joy of cycling, for supporting campaigns and showing that change can be positive and that its always worth fighting for, even if you maybe don't seem to win straight away. Thanks for helping me feel positive and encourage others to cycle. And thanks for connecting me to a wider cycling community; you ride on your own, but you're never alone if you're riding your bike.

Fiona
McLean

My Much-Loved Spokes Map

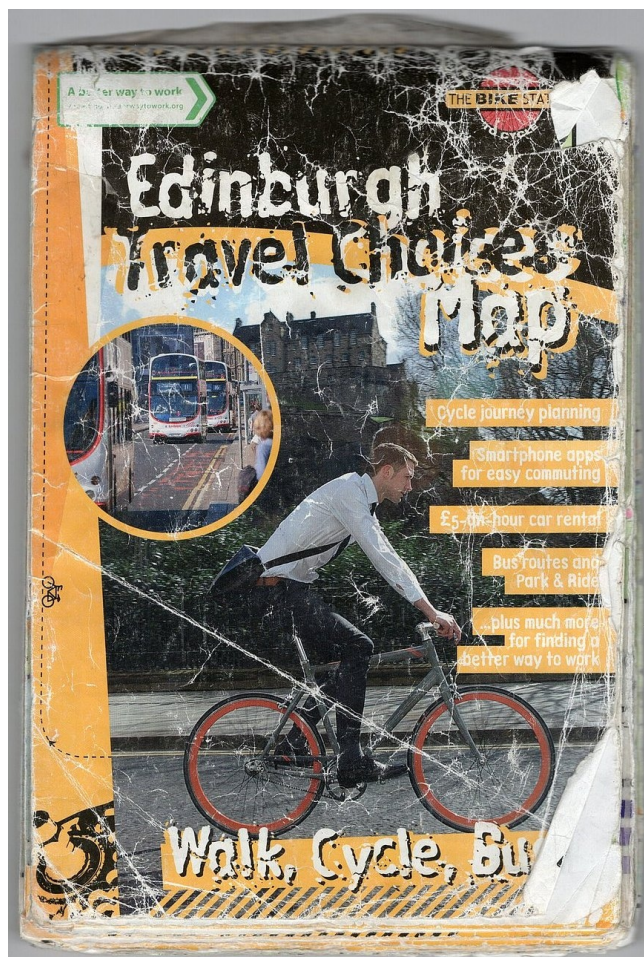
I just love my Spokes Edinburgh map!

I've had it for years now, and it has come with me on many journeys across the city. It has been battered by wind and rain when hastily pulled out of my rucksack to check a route and is now just about holding together thanks to various bits of sticky tape added over the years.

I could buy a new one, but I don't quite have the heart to part with this one after all the places it has helped me travel to.

When I'm heading somewhere unfamiliar, I still really enjoy spreading out the map beforehand and plotting a route using cycle paths and quieter roads. It's so great to have a map that gives cyclists so much useful information in one place.

So thank you, Spokes — my slightly battered, much-loved map is still very much part of my bike journeys.



Katharine
Wake

The Essence of Spokes

I have enjoyed, been involved and informed, and benefitted in so many ways from my Spokes membership. This is my attempt to sum it up!

S – **s**upportive and **s**ociable **s**ustainable transport campaign group, run by **s**ensible folk working to improve the **s**ituation on the **s**treets for cyclists and **s**olve problems eg bike **s**torage, transport to **s**chool and **s**o on

P – **p**olite, **p**ersuasive **p**olicies, input to **p**lanning, **p**ublic meetings, **P**edal on **P**arliament, effective **p**romotion of and **p**rotection for worthwhile cycling **p**rojects. Also **p**lenty of **p**rizs for competitions! Deserving of lots of **p**raise

O – **O**ther things – **o**utstanding maps, well-researched information in bulletins and Spokesworker, **o**verview of cycling domestically and abroad, entertaining competitions, **o**pen to all

K – awareness of **k**ey issues, tact and diplomacy when dealing with **k**notty problems

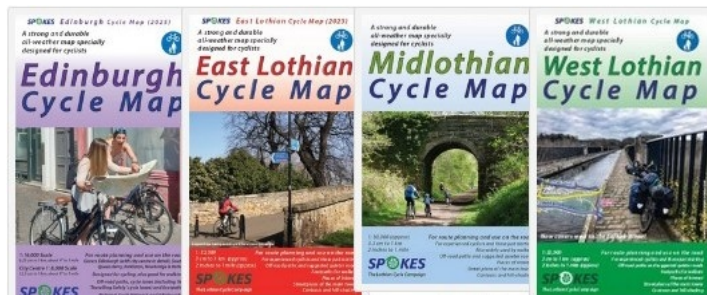
E – **e**ffective campaigning, well-organised **e**vents, **e**stablished credibility with government at **e**very level

S – **S**pecial and **S**plendid

Elaine
Appleby

A Toast to Spokes Maps

*Scenic and commuter rides galore,
Pedalling from the Pentlands to the shore.
Out on safe, quiet old rail track,
Know the map will show a good route back.
East West Link connects across the city -
(Some fantastic work by Spokes committee!)
-Makes the journey safe for young and older,
A segregated lane makes all feel bolder.
Put your hands together, give them a toast:
Spokes maps are really worth a boast.*



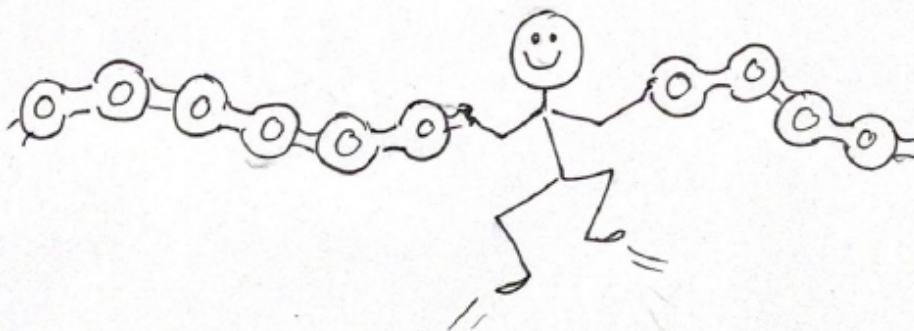
Katharine
Wake

Spokes speaks for me

Back in the mists of time, I moved to Edinburgh with my bike. Cyclists were viewed with suspicion back then, bizarre eco warriors in the Kingdom of the Car.

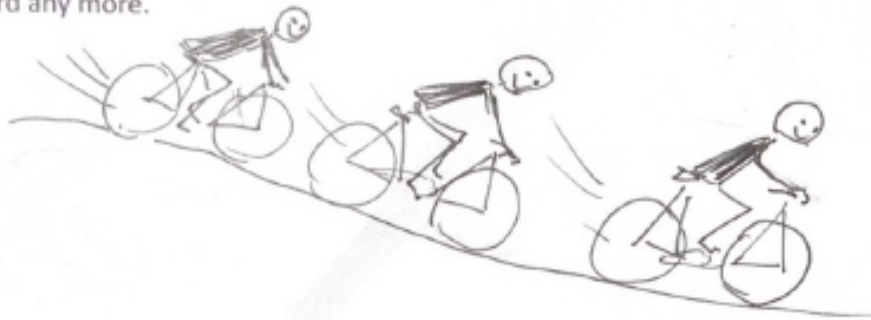


I discovered Spokes! Brilliant bulletins, masterly maps, motivational meetings and cracking competitions. Instead of being a solitary nut I was a link in a bigger chain.



Continued overleaf

Time passed, Spokes spoke out, politely persuaded politicians, coaxed councillors and campaigned for change. The two-wheeled revolution gained momentum and cycling wasn't weird any more.



The years rolled on, the cycle network grew, there were Spokes Bike Breakfasts, cycle training for all, and bike travel was boosted. The car no longer reigned supreme.



Somewhere along the way a pothole had my name on it. Crash! Ouch! Spokes to the rescue with advice and guidance – and my compensation claim was successful.



Whizz to today and look back over the long journey and the many milestones. Spokes has been key to transformational change and the evidence is everywhere in the extensive cycle network across Edinburgh and the Lothians (take a look at the new maps) and I am daily grateful.

What a journey – wheel done Spokes!



**Simon
Krone**

Maritzburg to Amsterdam via Edinburgh

I am originally from South Africa and have lived in Edinburgh for around two years now. I've been a member of spokes for over a year with intermittent input and comment in the planning group. We fight the good fight and it's sometimes rewarding but perhaps mostly frustrating. Big car is a formidable opponent.

I find myself getting wound up, as I'm sure we all do. When I cycle around Edinburgh, the following thoughts always pop into my head. This cycle path down Leith walk is bumpy and winds in funny ways; walkers should be more careful as they stray into the cycle path on Middle Meadow Walk; this green bike traffic-light phasing makes no sense and it takes me ages to get through this intersection whilst cars sail through; and there really ought to be a safer way for me to leave this cycle lane and cut across these three lanes of traffic to turn right at the intersection in Tollcross.

I moved from South Africa to the UK around four years ago and it's amazing how quickly I've started to take the things we have in Edinburgh for granted. I can confidently say that these things don't really exist at all on South African roads. We don't have segregated cycle lanes. We don't have bike lanes through parks for walkers to step into. We don't have green bike-light phasing at traffic lights and you simply would not cross three lanes of traffic under any circumstance in a city centre. But sadder than all of this is that in my local city, Pietermaritzburg (Maritzburg), a city of very comparable size to Edinburgh, does not have a Spokes or a safer-streets cycle advocacy group. Perhaps groups tried and failed, or perhaps there is no appetite for cycling on Maritzburg streets.



Simon in Edinburgh



Typical street in Maritzburg

It's been great to learn about Spokes's nearly 50 years of advocacy history. The infrastructure in the UK and Edinburgh has truly opened my eyes to the possibilities of getting around a city by bike. We still have a lot to do and I constantly feel envious of cities like Amsterdam where cycle infrastructure has progressed cycling into normality. It's hard to not feel a bit bitter when cycle infrastructure schemes are put on hold by the Council or budgets are cut and it feels like we're not moving forward as fast as we should.

Spokes inspires me because it sees things the way I do. It doesn't accept that things are as good as they can be, but Spokes also has done a lot to highlight where it has come from and that things weren't always as good as it is now. I am grateful for the infrastructure we have and that Spokes can exist, be relevant and be impactful. I would love to see Maritzburg, my home city, make cycling a viable form of transport on South African roads and maybe even be like Amsterdam. I hope it won't take 50 years, as we can learn from other cities like Edinburgh to speed up the process, but we all have to start somewhere.