This piece was written for the May 2018 edition. Much was made of stopping at pubs and cafés which may or may not be possible.

CYCLING AROUND CUMNOR – MAY 2018

Hopefully by the time you read this Spring will have sprung, the sun will be shining, and you'll want to get the bike out for a quick spin to a country pub (or café if there were any). Before you do it's a good idea to check the bike over, and decide where to go.

Is your bike in shape? Is it falling to pieces?

The best way to check that the bike is 'solid' is to stand at one side facing it. Hold the handlebars and saddle, put the pedal at its lowest position, and press firmly down on it with your foot. You should feel some 'give' as the pedal moves away from you (a bit). If it clonks or there is a lot of movement, something is wrong. You may be able to tell whether it's the wheel bearings, loose pedals, or handlebars, or something else. But unless you know how to fix it, take it to a bike shop such as Warlands or get help from someone who can help.

Other advice at www.cyclescheme.co.uk/community/how-to/check-your-bike-in-2-minutes

Are the tyres OK?

If your bike hasn't been used for a while it will probably have flat tyres. Pump them up and leave them overnight and take a look in the morning. They should be about the same as you left them last night.

Do the wheels go round?

They probably do, but you can waste a lot of effort if they don't go round easily. Lift up the frame at the front and spin the wheel, and then do the same for the back wheel. The wheel should spin for at least 30 seconds or so. If it doesn't turn more than a few times you'll find it will slow you down noticeably. Check the brakes aren't rubbing on the rims, and that the wheel is 'round' without sideways wobbles. If neither of these is the case and it's still stiff, then the wheel bearings may need checking.

Do the pedals go round?

Spin the pedals and chain (backwards). With a hefty spin they'll probably only go round about twice. Any less than this and you may have a rusty chain, or stiff gears.

Do the brakes work?

It's much more important to be able to stop than start! Ride somewhere very quiet (not down a hill) and test each brake separately. The front brake should stop you quickly, while the back one won't be so efficient.

Nothing serious wrong?

Getting the bike ready

It's well worth:

- Pumping the tyres up nice and hard. If you have a pump with a pressure gauge you should pump to at least 40 pounds per square inch on a mountain bike, and over 60 on 'road' bikes. The tyres usually have a recommended pressure on them. If you don't have a pressure gauge, 40 psi means it's quite difficult to squeeze the tyre, and over about 80 means that it feels rock solid. The smaller the wheel (both in diameter and tyre size) the higher you'll need to pump not to make cycling difficult.
- Lubricating the chain and other moving bits. There are many ways of lubricating moving parts. For chains and gear cogs WD40 or a very light spray oil is the simplest as long as you remember to do it each time you cycle or about once a week, and don't spray it on the carpet! And don't get oil near the brakes.
- Go for a short test run to check it all works.

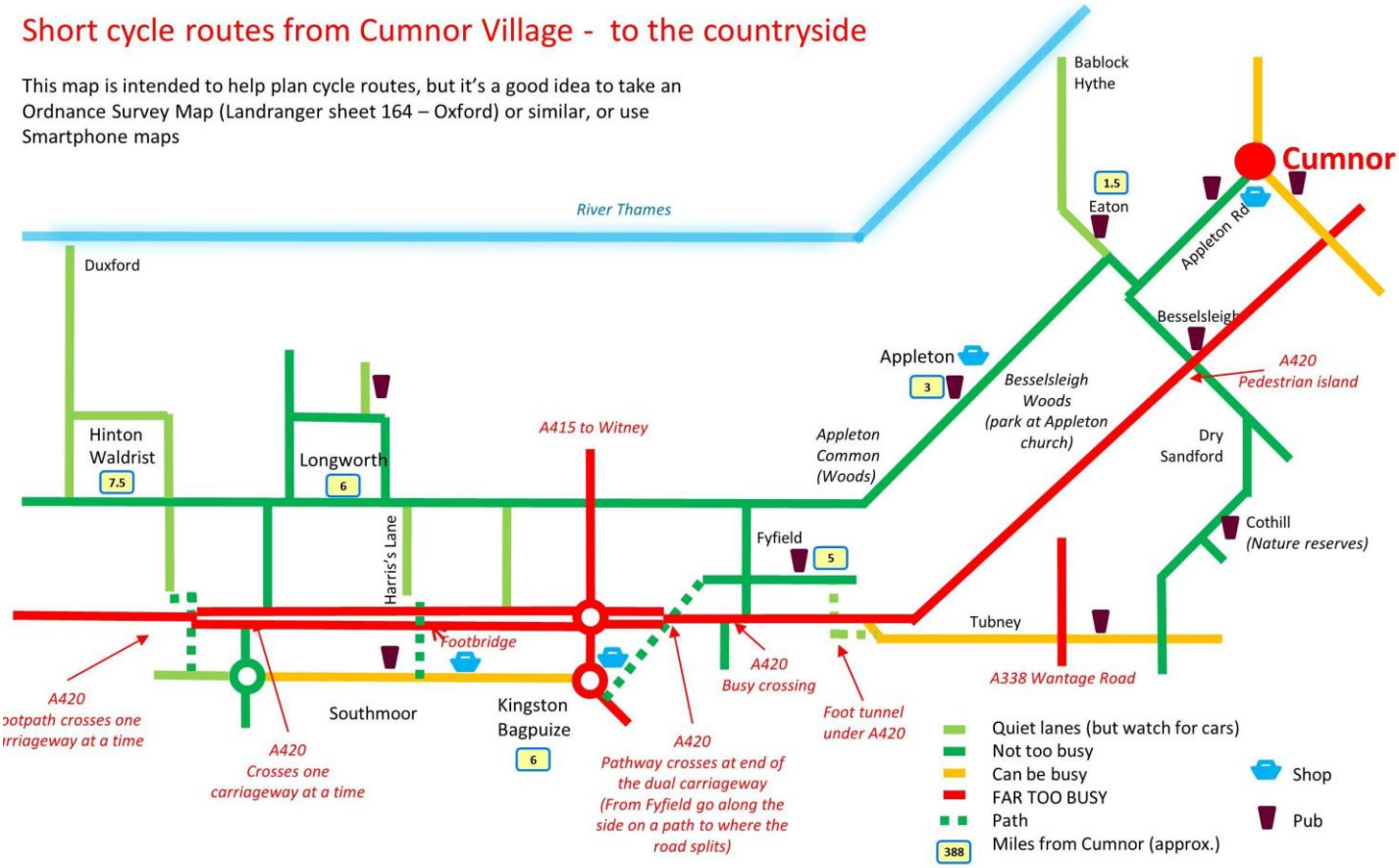
Five reasons to cycle

- Have fun
- Get yourself fitter and healthier
- Reduce the amount you drive (saving money and the environment)
- Find places you didn't know existed
- See the local area from a different perspective

What to take with you

- Wear comfortable clothes that you won't get too hot or cold in. Most people who wear lycra do it for show, but it is comfortable
- Something waterproof unless you're really sure it's not going to rain
- Wear a crash helmet – some argue that they make you less safe because you get a false sense of security, but my advice is to wear one AND cycle safely
- A bike lock – a cheap one will do for a short stop in a 'safe' place, but otherwise a solid "D" lock
- If you're going more than a distance you can walk home from, take:
    - water or other drinks
    - a spare inner tube if you know how to change it, or a mobile phone if you have friends who'd pick you up in case of breakdown

Where to cycle around Cumnor?



From Cumnor village the obvious route for new cyclists is to go down Appleton Road, and come back the same way. Once you know what you're doing the world is your oyster, but to start with you can go to:-

- Eaton (The Eight Bells), or carry on past there down to Bablock Hythe.
- Go left soon before Eaton and go to Besselsleigh (The Greyhound)
- Appleton (The Plough, and the community shop), and maybe walk to Besselsleigh Woods from the church, where the bluebells are lovely
- Through Appleton you can carry on to Fyfield (The White Hart), Longworth (The Blue Boar) and Hinton Waldrist which has a nice lane past the church down to the river.

I mention the pubs as they're about the only places you can get any refreshment – not to advocate drinking while cycling. But start with short distances and you'll soon be wanting to go further.

Avoid the A420 at any cost – it has been claimed to be the most dangerous road in the South. But you can cross it safely:-

- Here in Cumnor on either of the bridges
- At Besselsleigh – using the traffic island just South of the junction
- At Fyfield, using a path with a subway from the road in Fyfield to the Tubney Road
- A footbridge down Harris's Lane in Longworth, over to a new housing estate in Kingston Bagpuize.

The map may help with ideas. In a future article I'll describe some longer routes.