

EOIN O'BRIEN, in the second of two articles on a cycling plan for Dublin city, proposes ways through and around the troubled city traffic, for those who would pedal.

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A city cycle network

IF YOU have read the previous article you will have been able to solve the conundrums: "Tell me how to get from Templeogue to Ringsend without passing or being passed by a motor car?" and "How can one get from the Custom House to Blanchardstown in 30 minutes without passing or being passed by a motor car?" A glance at the map provides the solution. I cycled and walked these routes recently and was surprised by the possibilities that exist for a cycle network from the inner city to the outskirts. Moreover, each route has its own unique beauty and charm.

The Dodder way

It was many years since I had been on the Dodder, and as I cycled along its banks I wished I had returned to this delightful river sooner. It is beautifully kept by Dublin Corporation and the banks have been landscaped imaginatively in many places. In fact, the amount of good work that has been done in improving the park and river amenities (especially the Dodder and Royal Canal) throughout the city deserves comment — the landscaping and planting of many of the areas through which I passed are a credit to the Corporation which all too often receives opprobrium rather than praise.

It is possible to cycle along most of the Dodder from Templeogue to Ringsend, and though at times the cyclist encroaches on the preserve of the pedestrian it would be possible to utilise both banks of the river to give both cyclist and pedestrian the pleasure of this river. A cycle lane along the Dodder would give the inhabitants of Tallaght, Firhouse, Kimmage, Templeogue, Rathfarnham, Terenure, Churchtown, Milltown, Donnybrook and Ballsbridge, ready

access to and from the city. I negotiated 10 road junctions along the route and these could be made safe with a system of cycle traffic lights.

Cappagh/Ringsend

The people of Clondalkin, Cappagh, Walkinstown, Ballyfermot, Inchicore, Drimnagh, Crumlin, Kilmainham, Dolphins Barn, Rathmines and Ranelagh can enter the city along the banks of the Grand Canal. It is possible to go as far as Ringsend, but there are many points of entry to the city along this route.

At present there is a tarmac surface along most stretches of the canal bank, and though the intersections with main roads are frequent (16 between Cappagh and Ringsend) it would be possible to avoid at least some of these by bringing the cycle lane under the bridges, and cycle traffic lights could be erected for the remainder.

As with the Dodder the availability of both banks means that pedestrian walks can be preserved. At Kilmainham you can take a route to the inner city by following the old canal extension which has been filled in but the grassy stretch that was once water does have a tarmac path that could easily accommodate a cycle lane with direct access to Thomas Street.

Dalkey to Ringsend

The railway line from Dalkey to Lansdowne Road is accompanied by a public pathway (the property, I believe, of CIE) which varies greatly in its dimensions, surfacing and integrity.

At places it is in effect a roadway; in some areas it is a pedestrian walk; in others it is overgrown, or has been taken over for garden development by adjacent houses. There would be greater problems in developing this route than those of the canals

on the Dodder, but what an effective and picturesque way it would be of bringing the residents of Killiney, Dalkey, Sallynoggin, Ballybrack, Dun Laoghaire, Monkstown, Blackrock, Booterstown and Merrion into and out of the city.

At Monkstown, Blackrock and Booterstown the parklands to the left of the railway could accommodate a cycle lane without upsetting their amenity value, and after Merrion Gates the cycle lane could be run along the reclaimed stretch at Sandymount and this could be continued into Ringsend. There are 12 road junctions on this 10 mile route along the metals and sea.

Bray to 'the Green'

Over the years there have been many suggestions for the restoration of the old Harcourt Street railway line. To restore it as a cycle/pedestrian route would cost very little and would return to the people at least in part an amenity which should never have been abolished. The laying of a tarmac surface for cyclists would be a fraction of the cost of erecting a road suitable for motor transport and lightweight bridges would replace the railway bridges that have been removed.

Were this restored as a cycle lane a very direct and pleasing means of access to and from the city would be available for the residents of Bray, Shankill, Cabinteely, Sandyford, Ballinteer, Foxrock, Carrickmines, Goatstown, Dundrum, Churchtown, Windy Arbour, Milltown, Rathgar, and Rathmines.

I walked the Harcourt Street line from Milltown to Shankill. Unfortunately stretches of the line have been sold and are now incorporated into gardens or developments. Other parts are impassable, and at places possessive dogs reflect their owners' outlook on life and make progress hazardous.

The view of the Dublin mountains from this route is unique and made it all worthwhile.

So much for the southside. If there were cycle lanes along the railway and seafront, the Dodder, the Grand Canal and the Harcourt Street line, most southside residents could reach Ringsend in safety and enjoyment.

Now a look at the northside possibilities.

The Royal Canal

One of the most surprising and rewarding of my explorations was the Royal Canal. My prior acquaintance with this waterway was confined to brief sightings of it from car or bus at Phibsboro or Drumcondra, and my memory of these was none too pleasant. But it is a wonderful stretch of water, greatly surpassing the more exposed Grand Canal, and equalled only for beauty by the Dodder. The residents of Blanchardstown, Castleknock, Ashtown (and indeed as far out as Lucan) Finglas, Glasnevin, Cabra, Phibsborough and Drumcondra have at their doorsteps a most beautiful amenity providing them with a ready cycle route to and from the city.

I cycled in peace and safety from Blanchardstown to Dorset Street, a distance of some seven miles in less than half an hour and the only time I sighted the motor car was when I crossed the nine road junctions along the way.

Phoenix Park

The Phoenix Park is ideal for cycling. A cycle lane could be provided alongside the main centre road, and with a perimeter route around the park would provide access for residents of Ashtown, Castleknock, Blanchardstown, Palmerston and Chapelizod to the upper quays. From here it should be possible to plan a link route (utilising the less-used side streets) that would bring cyclists to O'Connell Street or onwards to the Liffey mouth to



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join either the north or south city systems. Also the Grand Canal route to Thomas Street could join this link route along the Liffey.

Howth to the Quay

A pedestrian pathway bearing frequent warnings to cyclists, and complete with barriers to hasten their downfall runs from Fairview to the Bull Wall. There is ample space here for a cycle path, which could be extended to Sutton to provide a safe and pleasant means of access to and from the city for the residents of Howth, Sutton, Baldoyle, Kilbarrack, Raheny, and Dollymount. Alternatively it might be possible to run this route through the North Bull Island connecting this with the mainland across the low waters at Sutton Strand.

Ferry system

With the exception of the Harcourt Street railway line route and the Phoenix Park route, six of the proposed cycle paths terminate on either the north or south side of

the Liffey mouth, and both systems could be linked by a cycle ferry.

At present a pedestrian ferry operates between the North Wall and John Rogerson's Quay and York Road on either side of the mouth of the Dodder, from 7.30 in the morning until 6.30 in the evening, at the cost of 6p per person. Unfortunately, this ferry is not designed for bicycles, but a raft ferry which would serve both pedestrians and cyclists would be an inexpensive and worthwhile expansion of the existing service.

If in addition the ferry crossed the Dodder from York Road to John Rogerson's Quay cyclists from the south seafroft route and the Dodder could reach O'Connell Street by coming directly up the quays.

These proposed plans would give Dublin city an unique network of connecting cycle lanes which would allow the commuting cyclist to reach the centre city from most suburban areas in peace and safety. An added incentive to cycle would be the beauty

of many of the proposed routes.

Moreover if a cycle ferry was available across the Liffey the cyclist could pass from one side of the city to the other without having to enter the congested city centre. Not only would this permit the commuting Dubliner to gain access to the city, it would provide a safe means for children to travel to school, and would moreover serve as a tourist amenity.

The costs of the system would be a fraction of providing for the needs of the motorist, and the environmental and health benefits resulting from a reduction in motor car usage would more than justify the outlay.

It would seem that the Ministers of the Department of Finance, Transport and Power, the Environment and Health have good cause to sit down together and make a serious effort to get the people cycling and walking rather than driving. A cycle network for the city would make a very good start.

Concluded