

Cycle Facilities in the South of Holland

I have recently spent a couple of weeks in Ginneken a suburb/village of Breda. It is roughly the equivalent of Trumpington. The Windmill in the village of Ulvenhuit about 2 miles further out.



There is a very high level of cycling which helps reduce congestion. Ginneken is bypassed but still has a high level of traffic at rush hour. Considerable efforts have been made to prevent thro' traffic by having a considerable number of the roads one way for cars and lorries. Nearly all of these one way streets have two way cycling which is always indicated by an exception sign and is often shown by road markings. Road markings can be painted lines but in villages are usually shown by brick sets. Most roads in villages have sets rather than tarmac.



There is a very high level of cycling to the shops, nearly all children over ten ride bikes to school. They are never supervised but usually ride in groups of two to eight. Riding in pairs is normal. The only cyclists that wear helmets are racing cyclists or serious off roaders. Cyclists are common at all times. Many cyclists use umbrellas, there are a few unusual designs, a lot of women have a child seat sometimes two on a bike, a few bikes have covered spaces for children, I saw a few tricycles usually with the two wheels at the front and relatively close together. (Picture). There were no tag along bikes for children. Cyclists do not appear to use hand signals. They move out to indicate their intention and this appears to work. Cyclists sometimes jump red lights just like in England. Cycle lights in town are often not used, even though a high proportion of bikes come with lights fitted. Cycle lights are used in country areas as street lighting ends about a mile out of town even on paths running parallel to main access roads. Cycle routes away from roads are heavily used but don't have lighting. I saw no evidence of conflicts between cyclists and other road users.



Track and Lane widths. These vary depending on locations but the general widths are:

Single two way paths beside a major access road are usually 3M and have a central dotted line. Usually these are shared use. Lane discipline is quite good.

One way paths i.e. one on each side of the road, are usually 2 Metres and are usually segregated. Cycle Paths are between the road and the footpath. Separation varies but is usually 1M. Crossings are segregated in busy areas. Crossing lights are usually in the direction of flow for cyclists. Buttons are used to call the lights. There are low level repeaters in some places. Call buttons usually have a clicker to indicate when they have been activated or the time remaining to cross. Pedestrians can go either way and lights show this.



Paths in country areas such as NCR routes are usually two and some times two and a half Metres wide. Again they are shared use. Usually there is no dotted centre line. They appear to be adequate for two people riding together.

Paths in forest areas are variable width but usually have a good surface if they are part of a route. You need wide tyres for a comfortable ride.



Lanes on road are usually one to one and a half Metres and can be either mandatory or shared use. If the road is narrow and one way then the side of the road with the general flow does not have a marked lane. Generally cycle paths outside villages become cycle lanes in smaller villages often show by blocks but are not mandatory.



The standard of maintainance is always good and there was little or no evidence of grass growing over the paths.



Dutch people are just as bad as we are at parking in cycle lanes even when there is a raised barrier!



One interesting system is the use of marker points called fietsknooppunt. Each reference point has a specific number so you can define a route by calling up the reference points on it. When you are at a point you will observe a notice with the number prominently displayed on it. At this point there are route indicators to other reference points. The route is specified at any junctions you cross. There are also regular signposts which specify the next villages and the distances to these villages. Maps are available that specify distances between reference points. Photos show the system. There is a system of NCN routes some of which go hundreds of kilometres just like our routes in England.



I observed that tarmac paths were used in flood plain areas close to the River Mark see pictures. There was an nearby alternative route that would be used in time of flooding.



On several minor roads I observed that there was a central lane for cars with non mandatory lanes on either side for cyclists which were used by cars when two cars met.



Mike Stapleton 17th November 2009