

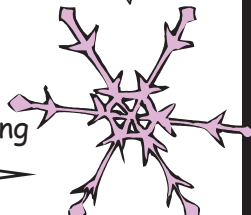
Spokes Christmas Meal 2008

For the **Spokes Christmas Meal** this year we have once again booked a table at the Essex Arms, Langley way, Watford (*on the Cassiobury estate*) for lunch at 12.30 on **Sunday December 14th**.

The cost of the meal is a little higher than last year, but it is still very good value, so we are hoping that as many of you as possible will be able to come, so put the date in your diary now!

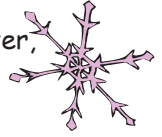
There will be a choice of a **2 course meal** for **£9.99** or a **3 course meal** for **£11.99**, excluding drinks of course!

The **Menu** is as follows:



Starters

1. **Soup of the Day (v)** Piping hot soup served with half a soft white roll
2. **Split Back Garlic Prawns** Tiger prawns marinated in garlic and served shell-on in sizzling hot melted butter with ciabatta bread
3. **Crispy Mushrooms (v)** Flat mushrooms in a crispy real ale batter, served with sour cream dip

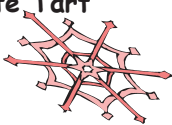


Main Courses

1. **Festive Turkey** Slices of tender turkey served with sage and onion stuffing, bacon-wrapped chipolata, Yorkshire pudding, roast potatoes, seasonal vegetables and gravy
2. **Salmon Fillet** Chargrilled salmon fillet served with chips, peas and grilled tomato
3. **10oz Rump Steak** Flavoursome 10oz rump steak grilled to your liking and served with chips, onion rings, flat mushroom, peas and grilled tomato
4. **Parsnip Roast (v)** Parsnip, cranberry and goat's cheese roast served with roast potatoes, seasonal vegetables and a vegetarian gravy

Desserts

1. **Christmas Pudding** Served simply with brandy sauce
2. **Apple Crunch Tart** A light pastry base filled with apple, a layer of crumble and finally caramel. Served piping hot with custard
3. **Chocolate Tart** A sweet pastry base filled with rich chocolate, hazelnut and raisin cream ganache. Served with vanilla ice cream and raspberry compote



PS There is also a short ride to the pub

London Open House by Bike

by Diana



On Saturday 20th September an intrepid band of Spokes members headed for Harrow on Open House weekend.

We met at Bushey Station and set off along the railway path from Watford Heath. This is where my dad used to point out proudly to us where the steam trains picked up water so I knew it well and wasn't deterred by the stinging nettles that caused some problem to those wearing shorts!

Following the railway line further along at South Oxhey we crossed a field and arrived at Hatch End, negotiating some tricky roads to view the Harrow Arts Centre, which was previously the Commercial Travellers' School.

On along the Uxbridge Road to the Victorian All Saints Church, Harrow Weald, designed by architect William Butterfield; where we admired the Burne-Jones stained glass window and gingerly climbed up to the belfry to watch the bell ringers at work. As we left I found it difficult to avert my eyes from the sausages sizzling away for the afternoon's barbecue and fayre!

We then followed our trusty leader, David no less, through the busy streets to Rayners Lane to round off our trip via the Grosvenor Cinema, opened in 1936 and designed by local architect F.E. Bromige, responsible for many cinema buildings in the South of England.

This cinema, familiar to local people as the Odeon, then the Gaumont, closed in 1986, went through various refurbishments until it fell into decay and was rescued by followers of a rather impressive ancient religion - the Zoroastrians - who have worked wonders in its restoration as their meeting place.

As we sat in the cinema's circle we listened to an interesting talk by a Zoroastrian - Spokes members taking a full part in the questions afterwards!



We were shown round by Robert Douglas-Law, a Harrow resident who has kept a photographic record of all the changes to the building.

He amused us by recalling how he was refused entry, for being too young, on his first visit to see a film at eight years old with his brother. Luckily for them two usherettes in their traditional black uniforms with white collars called them back in after consulting the manager!

Back out into the sun we cycled to Pinner for a welcome pub lunch and home to Watford.

My Cycle Trip to India

From Mysore to Kovalam by Lesley



I have always wanted to visit India – not as a tourist but as a traveller. What better way to achieve this than on a bike? I didn't want to do a charity ride so I had a look on the

Internet and settled on a trip run by Exodus (www.exodus.co.uk).

I booked my holiday last November for travel the following February. During this time I had to arrange my immunisations and an Indian Visa. As I was very busy with my work I decided to use the services of a courier company for my Indian Visa. Sadly my passport got stolen en route to the embassy! I was then faced with just one week to go, no passport and no Indian Visa. I organised an emergency passport and spent the best part of a day in the Indian High Commission on the Strand awaiting my visa. That was an experience in itself!

I decided to take my own bike so arranged to get it serviced so it would be in tip top condition. I have never taken apart a bike before so used my feminine “dumb blonde” charms to talk my friend's husband into doing it for me. That is when we discovered that my gear set had got damaged in my shed, no doubt from one of my children throwing their bike on top of it. I had to use my trusty old red Specialized bike instead (it is still in bits in my shed – any volunteers to put it back together for me?)

I arrived at the airport and Gulf Air decided to charge me £140 excess baggage! After some negotiation I managed to get that reduced to £80. When I arrived in India I discovered I was the first person ever to have been charged an excess so I wasn't so lucky – oh well never mind! In fact when we arrived I very much regretted taking my own bike as the Exodus supplied bikes were very good. Specialized Rock Hoppers, new that season.

I met with my fellow travellers at Bangalore Airport. There were 12 cyclists, the Tour Leader, a bike mechanic and the driver of our back-up vehicle. It was truly international. The Tour Leader was an English guy living in Sri Lanka, the bike mechanic was a charming 18 year old Sri Lankan boy and the driver, Ashok, was a local. The most charming and polite man I have ever met. Amongst the cyclists was an American from Ohio, a French girl from Germany, 3 Scots and the rest of us English.

We got on a bus for a transfer to Mysore. India is stunningly colourful. Full of hustle and bustle and every type of transportation imaginable! Oxen, auto rickshaws, motorbikes, trucks, cars, carts, elephants and of course lots and lots of bicycles. Bicycles everywhere. I have never seen so many uses for a bicycle. It was not unusual to see a whole family on one bicycle.

Every day was an adventure on this trip. Just totally amazing. The palace in Mysore, the temple at Guravayor, the remains of Tipul Sultan's palace. Paddy fields being worked on foot with an ox pulling the plough. So much rubbish everywhere. One particular memory I have is of cycling through a quiet village early one morning. It had been set up in readiness for a Hindu festival. Massive

speakers everywhere. There was not a soul in sight. What music was blaring through the speakers? Hindi music? Bollywood? No – “I’m a Barbie Girl” by Aqua – so funny and not what you would expect.

What was our accommodation like? Very variable. We stayed in some very mediocre hotels, a beautiful cabin in Bandipur National Park, a fantastic “homestay” in Cochin and a lovely 4 star hotel in Ootycamund which is a Hill Station and was the summer capital of the Raj. In my opinion the most basic places were the best – more character.

Were we ill? Yes! Only a couple of us though. It would be very unusual to survive a fortnight in India without a stomach upset. I also fell off my bike amazingly from hitting a speed bump in a village. I have never had so much attention. I hurt myself quite badly but people were rushing out of shops offering me everything from water and food to a cuddle!

Included in the cost of our trip was breakfast each morning wherever we were staying which usually consisted of fruit, toast, eggs and curry if you wanted it. Usually we would eat lunch somewhere local. Normally it would be a dhal with chapattis and water. In the evening we would eat at a local restaurant. Keralan cuisine includes a lot of fish as well as vegetarian dishes. The Indian wine is not to be recommended so we would usually wash down our meal with Indian beer – usually Cobra which is very good.

We were given a Keralan cooking demonstration in the grubbiest kitchen I have ever seen. We moved from one bank of the river to the other complete with 14 bikes and large Indian families on what was described as a ferry but was little more than a raft - one false move and you would be in the river. We saw children everywhere! They always said, “Hi, how are you, what is your name?” Always with a High 5. We visited a children’s orphanage in Tamil Nadu. This was not a sad occasion though as it was a very happy place. The leader of our cycle ride takes all of his groups there and organises donations to buy them things they might not otherwise have; bicycles, play equipment for the garden etc.

We experienced busy roads, quiet back streets, beautiful beaches, stunning temples, churches and mosques. We were always welcomed warmly. Southern India is colourful, noisy, beautiful, dirty and very entertaining.

Towards the end of our trip we stayed overnight at an Ayurvedic resort – totally relaxing. I had a full body massage by two people for the equivalent of £10. We also went on an overnight barge trip on the Keralan backwaters complete with our bicycles on board.



It is incredible to think that after 900kms of cycling and 14 cyclists we did not experience one puncture. That was not because the roads were good – they most definitely weren’t.

I would highly recommend cycling in India and also Exodus holidays. I am going to do another trip with them next year – possibly Cape Town and the Winelands... so if anyone wants to join me

Do you have any thing to say!!

If so have you written to Iain our editor to make your views known?

Do you have ideas for attracting new members either to join our regular rides or for influencing councillors or others in authority to put more resources into improving cycling facilities?

What do you think of the blue cycle route signs now being installed by many local authorities?

Have you cycled along the new-shared use path by Queens School?

This is phase 1 of a 3 phase programme to provide a good cycling route from the A41 to Bushey serving Queens School.

Next year we should see the bridge over the River Colne at Oxhey Fields built and a safe crossing over the A41 at Garston provided.

Are you aware of the money our local councils allocate for cycling and how it is used, or not used?

At a recent SPOKES committee meeting it was decided to hold another **Open Meeting on Thursday 12 February 2009** at the Newton Price Centre. The meeting is for all who may have an interest in cycling. The theme will be “**Safer Cycling in People-friendly Neighbourhoods**”.

This will allow discussion on the condition of local roads & cycle routes, traffic control techniques, the various ways of introducing 20mph zones & how cyclists can influence the way roads are used.

If you know cyclists or officials interested in this topic please ask them to come to the meeting.

Enjoy your Winter cycling

SPOKES RIDES & EVENTS

DECEMBER / JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2008-9

Remember to bring: *water, spare inner tube, lights & reflective / waterproof clothing* as appropriate.

Disclaimer: Participants of rides must be over 16 unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. Insurance is your responsibility.

Spokes cannot accept liability for you or your possessions.

It is your responsibility to follow advice and the **Highway Code** at all times.

Your participation is the acceptance of these terms.

Note: All telephone numbers without codes are Watford (01923).

Please make sure you arrive in plenty of time at the start so rides can leave at the stated time

Saturday 6th December 10.00am Great North Way

Meet at Watford High Street Station for a ride via South Mimms along the Great North Way cycle path to Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City. About 40 miles with some hills. Contact Alan.

Friday 12th December 7.30pm Dick Whittington Pantomime

Group visit to have some family fun at the Palace Theatre as Dick heads to Watford to search for streets paved with gold. In order to guarantee your place please contact David immediately.



Sunday 14th December 10.30am Spokes Christmas Ride

For those who want to blow the cobwebs away before indulging there will be a ride of about 15 miles to the pub. Meet at Watford Metropolitan Station at 10.30am for a ride along the lanes via Sarratt and Chipperfield arriving at the Essex Arms at 12.30. Contact Pam.



Sunday 14th December 12.30pm Spokes Christmas Meal

At the Essex Arms. Merry Christmas!

See front and inside page for booking details & menu.

Contact Pam.



Thursday 18th December 8.00pm

Spokes Social Evening

Meet in the Moon Under Water pub - High Street, Watford - for a drink, Curry Club or other meal, and chat. We are normally in the dining area at the rear. Contact Diana.

Saturday 20th December 10.00am

East of Watford

Meet at Watford High Street Station to explore the green belt land sandwiched between Watford and Radlett/Borehamwood to the east. About 16 miles, mainly on quiet roads with some cycle tracks and bridleways. Please bring a packed lunch! Contact Nigel.

Saturday 3rd January

1.30pm

New Year Ride



Start the New Year with good revolutions! A short ride (*may include hills!*) starting and finishing at Kings Langley Station, including a stop for refreshments. Back by dusk.

Remember your lights! Contact Diane.

Thursday 15th January

8.00pm

Spokes Social Evening

Meet in the Moon Under Water pub - High Street, Watford - for a drink, Curry Club or other meal, and chat. We are normally in the dining area at the rear. Contact Diana.

Saturday 17th January

10.00am

Ride to Radlett

Meet at Bushey Station for an easy ride of about 10 miles with some off-road via Denham Country Park & Elstree aerodrome to Radlett then returning to the Toby Carvery at Aldenham for a relaxing drink or big lunch. Details from David.

Saturday 24th January

10.00am

South East of Watford

Meet at Watford High Street Station for a 14 mile ride along quiet lanes and streets heading towards Stanmore. Please bring a packed lunch! Contact Nigel.

Saturday 31st January

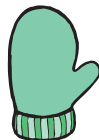
10.30am

John Bunyan Jaunt

Meet at the Garston Medical Centre, (located in Sainsbury's car park), just off Cow Lane for a loop around St Albans. Pub lunch.

About 25 miles **brisk** paced with some off-road.

Contact Iain.



Saturday 31st January 8.00pm

Barn Dance

Join us for a lively evening of dancing to the music of Asha.
Tickets **£9.00**. Held at the Harpenden Public Halls.

Contact Veronica for further details and tickets by **21st January**.

Sunday 1st February 10.30am

Amersham Circular

Meet at Amersham Metropolitan Station for a joint ride with HAWOG.
Medium to brisk road ride of about 25 miles from Amersham to Chartridge, Ashridge and Berkhamsted with stop for lunch.

If you intend to participate it would be helpful to advise David in advance to aid inter-group contact.

Tuesday 3rd February 7.30pm

Committee Meeting

Contact Roger for more information.

Thursday 12th February 7.30pm

Spokes Open Meeting

Meet at the Newton Price Centre, Grosvenor Road, Watford
for an Open Forum on

“Safer Cycling in People-friendly Neighbourhoods”.

Contact Roger for further details.



Saturday 14th February 10.30am

North West Triangle

Meet at Watford Metropolitan Station for a moderate 18 mile ride mainly on minor lanes through Leavesden Park, Bedmond & Chiswell Green.
Back for a late lunch! Contact Roger.

Thursday 19th February 8.00pm

Spokes Social Evening

Meet in the Moon Under Water pub - High Street, Watford - for a drink, Curry Club or other meal, and chat. We are normally in the dining area at the rear. Contact Diana.

Saturday 21st February 11.00am

Colney Street

Meet at Watford High Street Station to cycle Ride 18 (*with a probable diversion to avoid a muddy bridleway*) in the Spokes Blue Book.

Pub lunch. About 16 miles. Contact Mary Ann.

Looking Forward...

Sunday 1st March 11.00am Colne Valley and Alban Way

This ride will be **brisk** paced. We will start at the Elstree Aerodrome at 11am and head along the Colne Valley route via Bricket Wood to St Albans, then along the Alban Way to have lunch at the Speckled Hen pub in Hatfield Road. We will return along the cycle path along the A404 via London Colney and Radlett to Bushey. The ride will be about 40 miles and we should be home about 4.00pm. Bringing **lights** would be advisable in case of delay due to punctures.

Contact Ayman.

Thursday 26th March 8.00pm Spokes Social Evening

At the Moon Under Water pub.



Possible long weekend in Wales

Friday 27th - Monday 30th March

Bryn Melyn

Staying in 3* guest house in Barmouth. En-suite rooms with sea view.

Shed available for bike storage, drying room and licensed bar.

We recommend staying for 3 nights to allow 2 full days of cycling.

Options include mountain biking at Coed y Brenin (www.mbwales.com),

a gentle ride along the Mawddach trail and a scenic coastal ride.

Non cycling partners welcome as area is scenic and good for walking.

Price £40 per person for 2 nights or £50 for 3 nights

(based on 2 sharing a double or twin room). Includes buffet breakfast.

For further information and availability contact Veronica.

Deposit of £15 per person required by 31st January.

Saturday 4th April 10.00am Along the River Colne

Meet at Watford High Street Station for this 14 mile mainly off-road route which is extremely muddy so it is best to use a mountain bike.

Please bring a packed lunch! Contact Nigel.

Tuesday 21st April Spokes AGM

Details in the next newsletter...



by
Mary Ann

On my trip for three months to the USA in the summer, I decided I would not hire a car. I would buy a folding bike and travel by bus and train, using the bike for local transport. In the UK, I try to use my bike and public transport as much as possible. What would it be like not having a car in car-dominated America?

The main drawback is that a large proportion of the United States is inaccessible without one. Towns and cities have local bus networks and sometimes trains. Buses run between big cities and some towns, but there are extensive areas with no bus or train connections at all.

I don't think I could live in the United States without a car, but for three months it was manageable, as long as I planned my itinerary accordingly. I had to abandon the idea of visiting my brother in north-west Maine. The nearest town a bus went to was 85 miles away, and even to get to that town would take over 24 hours by several buses, compared to a four-hour drive. (My brother came to see me when I visited some of his children.)

Cycle provision on American public transport in cities and towns is generally very good. Almost all local buses now have bike racks on the front as standard. I was very glad to use one during a downpour in Chicago.

Provision on trains is more variable, with most commuter trains having space off peak but refusing access during rush hours. However, I was delighted to be able to travel on Caltrain in California, which has spacious Bike Cars, with either 32 or 16 places for bikes and the same number of seats for the cyclists,



available at all times not just off peak. They are very popular, so the main problem for cyclists is that the first-come-first-served system means that sometimes the car is full and they have to wait for the next one.

For longer distance travel by bus and train, it was essential to have a folding bike. Some Amtrak inter-city trains take full size bikes, but most do not. I discovered that one of the biggest problems I faced was getting my folded up bike from the point where I had folded it up and then onto the bus or train.

I went through many bus and train stations, but only one offered luggage trolleys. These days, most passengers have wheeled luggage, so trolleys are not much in demand, but it caused me many problems, since I was having to carry a bagged bike, two heavy panniers and a rucksack.

I was often offered help, but I don't like asking for it, so in the end, I resorted to wheeling my bike to the spot closest to where I thought I would board, and then folding it up there. I then had to deal with Amtrak officials saying "Where are you going with THAT?" but I talked them round.

Using my bike for transport wherever I was visiting was incredibly rewarding. I had established ahead of time where to get bike maps, which were invaluable. In a short time I was able to get the feel of a place and also find myself cycling through all sorts of unexpected forgotten corners.

I christened my new Bike Friday by cycling 14 miles to a barbecue in rural Vermont, part of the celebrations of my niece's wedding taking place the next day. I had directions for how to find the house on the complicated network of "dirt roads" which are a feature of Vermont.

Like British country lanes, dirt roads wind over and through the original topography of the land with lots of ups and downs. The gravel surface is usually well-packed and smooth, but not always. This trip was mostly up hill, since the house was at nearly 1,000 feet

elevation. I was glad of the 27 gears, especially the lowest one. I looked forward to using some of the higher gears on the trip back.

It was a lovely ride past traditional white clapboard farmhouses and red barns, beside pastures with cows and horses, along gurgling brooks and through sun-dappled woods where I could admire the sugar maples. Quintessential New England.

It was dark for my return journey. I set out and immediately realised that my basic cycle lights were not sufficient for moonless countryside with no street lights. Earlier, I had loftily declared to my family that my bike was my transport and I would not accept lifts unless they were going the same way anyway, so I didn't want to go back with my tail between my legs and ask for a lift.

It was an epic journey. I could just about see that I was on the road, but I couldn't see the surface of the road for holes and bumps, so I had to go very slowly, despite it being down hill. Occasionally (thank goodness it was only occasionally) a car came from the other direction and the headlights were so dazzling that I was virtually blinded. At the barbecue, I'd heard that bears are spotted quite frequently in the area. Would I run into a bear without even seeing it? No, I got back in one piece.

I'll relate some further cycling adventures in future issues of the newsletter.



How To Help

How did you find out about Spokes?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Personal recommendation | <input type="checkbox"/> Web-site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> On a cycle ride | <input type="checkbox"/> Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CyclePedia | <input type="checkbox"/> Cycles UK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neale & Sons | <input type="checkbox"/> Thirteen Cycles |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Northwood Cycle Depot | <input type="checkbox"/> The Bike Stall (Watford Market) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bikehut (Rickmansworth) | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Fair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |

Why do you cycle?

Can you help with any of the following?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Organising cycle rides | <input type="checkbox"/> Planning cycle schemes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying of routes | <input type="checkbox"/> Legal work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cartography / CAD | <input type="checkbox"/> Social events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter articles / artwork | <input type="checkbox"/> Dealing with local councils |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Merchandise / advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> Letter writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |



Quarterly Quotations

*"A bicycle hides nothing and threatens nothing.
It is what it does, its form is its function."* **Stuart Parker**

*"After your first day of cycling one dream is inevitable.
A memory of motion lingers in the muscles of your legs,
and round and round they seem to go."* **H.G. Wells**

How To Join

SPOKES membership is only **£8.00** per person per year, and just **£1.00** for each additional family member at the same address (*plus any donation you can afford*). For this amount you receive regular mailings on activities and actions and the satisfaction of helping us campaign for improved cycling conditions in the South West Herts area. We organise regular events and rides too. To join, complete form (*see other side too*) and send with cheque to:

Dara Godivala

6 Highland Road, Northwood Hills, Middlesex, HA6 1JT



Name(s)

.....

Address

.....

.....

Post Code Telephone

Amount £ Donation £ *Cheques payable to SPOKES please*

E-mail Address :



SPOKES DISCOUNTS

Show your **SPOKES** membership card
and get **10%** off repairs and spares at:

CyclePedia 01923 221901 70-78 Merton Road, Watford	Neale & Sons 01923 223916 26 Vicarage Road Precinct, Watford
Cycles UK 01923 243707 484 St. Albans Road, Watford	The Bike Stall Watford Market thebikestall@aol.com or 07941 800029
Thirteens Cycles 01923 234221 73 Chalk Hill, Oxhey, Watford	Northwood Cycle Depot 01923 824174 118 Pinner Road, Northwood
 Bikehut 01923 776901 145-147 High Street, Rickmansworth 	