

Affiliated to: Cyclists' Touring Club (CTC) [www.ctc.org.uk](http://www.ctc.org.uk)  
and Cyclenation [www.cyclenation.org.uk](http://www.cyclenation.org.uk)



# SOUTH WEST HERTS SPOKES CYCLING GROUP

Web-Site Version

Merry Hill Greenway  
Saturday 6 November



For more information please visit :  
[www.spokesgroup.com](http://www.spokesgroup.com)

WINTER: DECEMBER / JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2010-11 ISSUE # 67

# SKY RIDES

by Vince

Up at dawn, made my way to Watford Junction train to Harrow & Wealdstone station. A group of fifty plus left at 9.30am for Kingsbury & Gladstone park where we joined up with another 100 odd cyclists. We had several guides including our own David, and a hubby, wife and 3 kids family, riding on a tandem with



a baby box up front. We weaved a yellow stream through the by-ways of

north London's conurbation. Cyclists of both gender and all ages took part. There was a reverie spirit among this group with plenty of chat regarding bike types. Cheered along by passing crowds and



by Iain & Veronica

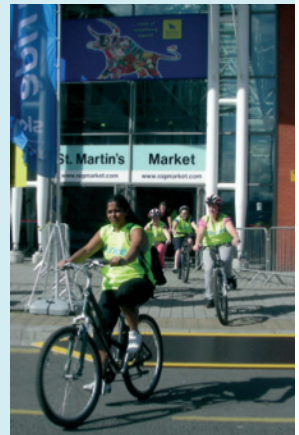
We could not attend the London event this year so thought it might be interesting to try the Birmingham Sky Ride on 12<sup>th</sup> September.



With the Bromptons folded we got the train to New Street station then followed a likely family to the start near the



Bullring shopping centre. The 8.3km (about 5 miles) route took us between empty market stalls then through the indoor



ringing our bells in unison, we gaily made our way into the Mall.

Suddenly left to ourselves we joined the wider community of bikers cycling through traffic free royal parks and the Embankment. There were penny farthings, piano cycle machines, a bike carrying 4 cyclists (*like a tandem*), no gear racing type bikes and an eclectic array of cyclists on all sorts of bikes.

Free energy drinks, water bottles and hi-vis yellow tops were available, plus a free bicycle check and a 3D cycle promotion film in a large tent. We were able to watch the short movie (*inspiring for many a future cyclist*) with bikes in hand – a drive-in movie for two wheelers only under cover. At 1500 hours we re-assembled to head back to Harrow. Again we were met with plenty of cars honking their horns at us in appreciation. (*This was encouraged by our younger members and wasn't exactly spontaneous*). We took an overhead pass of the M1 at the Welsh Harp: single file over the motorway from above; it must have looked like a yellow snake.

market where we were encouraged to make a noise by a loud percussive band; through Calthorpe Park; past Edgbaston cricket ground; ending up at Cannon Hill Park, before looping back along wide roads closed to motorised traffic. The same Sky Ride attractions & freebies were on offer, and we also saw a colourful and rhythmic Bangra dance display. We did 3 circuits of the route which attracted an estimated 15,000 riders.



## WINTER 2010 / 2011

A message from your chairman

We have seen some interesting improvements in the cycling infrastructure this summer. There is a new shared use path at the front of Watford Town Hall linking the subway to Cassiobury Park.

The path at the Cow Arch Tunnel under the railway by Carpenters Park Station has been remade into a shared use path. New shared use paths have been made though Leavesden Country Park. Also the bridleway from Bucknalls Lane to School Lane at Bricket Wood has been improved. All steps in the right direction. But the plans to change access to Watford Junction Station have yet to be finalised & implemented.

At the time of writing we are in the consultation stage for the County Councils 2010 Local Transport Plan (LTP).



The Spokes committee support many of the proposals in the draft document.

We believe investing in low cost safe cycling schemes provides good value for money, ahead of many other transport modes. Greater resources should be put into completing safe cycling networks encouraging more local cycling for work, shopping & recreational journeys.

Cycling reduces congestion & pollution whilst improving health & well-being.

We need to improve the urban environment, reduce the number of railings & barriers, consider the need for signs & traffic lights, reduce on-street parking & introduce more speed reduction schemes.

At all traffic lights consider advanced stop lines for cyclists.

Consider converting suitable pavements to shared use suitable for walkers, cyclists & electric scooters (disabled persons).

Ensure islands in the middle of single carriageway roads allow sufficient width for safe passage by cyclists.

On rural roads consider revising speed limits on narrow lanes where visibility is low, as they are particularly dangerous for pedestrians & cyclists when no footpath or safety verge is available. On these roads the maximum speed should be reduced to ensure vehicles can view other users & pass them in a safe manner.

Classified rural roads often have footpaths that are lightly used by pedestrians. Most of these paths should be converted to shared use paths allowing use by walkers, cyclists & electric scooters (disabled persons).

Recently on returning from a SPOKES ride though Whippendell Woods we came to the bridge over the canal & decided to visit the Cha-Cha-Cha café. We saw that money had been spent on new signs telling cyclists to dismount as we were approaching a children's play area. We never saw any children as it was a week day (at the weekend of course the children would be riding their bikes).

We did feel this way of thinking, preventing cycling was out of date. Most large recreational areas are now supportive of cycling; it never causes a problem at the Aquadrome or Leavesden Country Park. Why should cycling be prevented here?

I believe Watford Council should have sorted this issue by now, rather than being influenced by a small number of residents only considering their own interests.



# SPOKES RIDES & EVENTS

## DECEMBER / JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2010/11

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***

### **Wednesday 1 December 10.30**

### **Vince's Wednesday Ride**

**Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley** Easy ride on local roads with some hills to Chenies and Sarratt returning via Rousebarn Lane.

15 miles Slow Vince

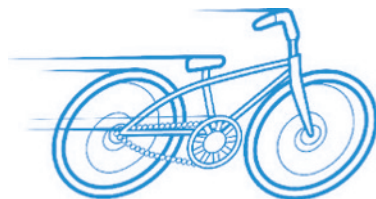
### **Saturday 4 December 14.00**

### **Mary Ann's Leaderless Ride**

**Cha-Cha-Cha Café, Cassiobury Park**

Ride to an early mulled wine and mince pie with Peter and Maureen at Blacketts, Rousebarn Lane, Chandlers Cross from 2.30pm onwards. Bring **lights** for return journey and **£2** per head to cover costs.

7 miles Slow



### **Thursday 9 December 10.00**

### **St Albans**

**Pump House Local Board Road** Ride through Bricket Wood and Chiswell Green and return via Potter's Crouch.

25 miles Medium Dennis



**Thursday 9 December 20.00**

**Spokes Social Evening**

**Moon under Water, High Street, Watford** Normal location is in the dining area at the rear. Chance for a meet up with fellow members for a drink and a curry. Diana

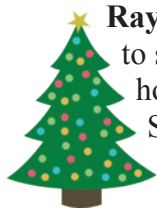
**Saturday 18 December 10.00**

**Black Jack's Mill**

**Pump House, Local Board Road** Ride along the Ebury Way and Colne Valley trail. 20 miles Medium Dennis

**Sunday 19 December 17.00**

**Christmas Lights Special**



**Rayners Lane Metropolitan Station** Ride with Harrow Cyclists to see beautifully lit reindeer, cycling Santas and much more on houses in the Harrow area followed by Carols by candlelight Service and festive treats at Rayners Lane Beacon Centre. 6 miles Slow David

**Sunday 26 December 10.00 – 14.00**

**Boxing Day**

**Annual Classic Vehicle Display**

**Sarratt on the Green** Classic cars, farm and commercial vehicles along with Veteran Cycle Club bicycles outside the Boot Public House.

**Sunday 2 January 10.00**

**Mass New Year Bike Ride**

**Ealing Town Hall, Uxbridge Road** Joint ride with HAWOG and Ealing cyclists. Flat route covering canal, Hillingdon cycle circuit, BMX track, viewpoint over Heathrow, Little Britain lake and a hidden zoo. Pub lunch. Over 30 cyclists attended this ride last year.

18 miles Slow Contact Rides coordinator

**Wednesday 5 January 10.30**

**Vince's Wednesday Ride**

**Watford High Street Station** Blue Book Ride № 8 via Ebury Way to lanes NW of Rickmansworth. 14 miles Slow Vince



**Thursday 6 January**

**20.00**

**Spokes Social Evening**

**Moon under Water, High Street, Watford** Normal location is in the dining area at the rear. Meet up with fellow members to consider plans for the New Year along with a drink and a curry. Diana

**Thursday 13 January**

**10.00**

**Denham**

**Pump House, Local Board Road** Go via Ebury Way, Aquadrome and Denham Country Park. Return via canal.  
30 miles Medium Dennis

**Sunday 16 January**

**12.30**

**Festive Lunch**

The venue for this year's post-Christmas festive lunch will be **Zaza's** Italian restaurant at 27 High Street, Bushey WD23 1BD.

Information about the restaurant can be found at [www.zazarestaurant.co.uk](http://www.zazarestaurant.co.uk)



We will be having the fixed price party menu at £19.95 for 3 courses, amounting to **£22.00** with the service charge. Drinks and supplements will of course be extra.

To book your place please contact Pam by December 18th.

**Sunday 23 January**

**11.00**

**Janet's New Year Jaunt**

**Garston Medical Centre** London Colney with coffee stop at Aylett's, returning via Bricket Wood before lunch.  
12 miles Medium Janet



**Wednesday 26 January 19.15**

**Pump House Youth Theatre**

**Local Board Road, Watford**

Not one but two plays from the 1960s:

**Blood Brothers & A Slice of Saturday Night.**

Contact Linden to book a place  
or for more information.



**Saturday 29 January 10.00**

**Apsley via Felden**

**Harvester Baldwins Lane, Croxley** Through Chandler's Cross and  
'Under the Heavens' to Belsize, dropping down to the canal from Felden.  
22 miles Medium Dennis

**Wednesday 2 February 10.30**

**Vince's Wednesday Ride**

**Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley** Easy ride on local roads to  
Chenies and Sarratt covering some hills.  
15 miles Slow Vince

**Saturday 5 February 10.30**

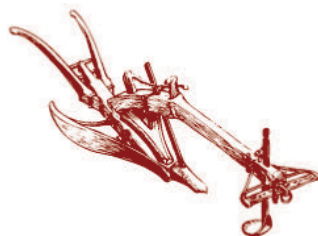
**Shenley Park**

**Garston Medical Centre in Sainsburys' car park** Ride with a couple  
of hills, some bridleways, if not too muddy. Lunch at pub or café.  
20 miles Medium Iain & Veronica

**Sunday 6 February 10.20**

**Aldenham & the Plough**

**Watford High Street Station** Joint ride  
with West Middx CTC via and Wall Hall to  
Aldenham Country Park for coffee stop. Then  
Radlett and the cycle path along the A414 to  
Smallford for a pub lunch at the Plough.  
35 miles Medium Ayman



**Monday 7 February 19.30**

**Committee Meeting**

*For more details contact Roger*



**Thursday 10 February 10.00**

**Whelpley Hill**

**Harvester, Baldwin's Lane, Croxley** A hilly ride through the best lanes in south-west Hertfordshire.

22 miles Medium Dennis

**Thursday 10 February 20.00**

**Spokes Social Evening**

**Moon under Water, High Street, Watford** Normal location is in the dining area at the rear. Chance for a meet up with fellow members for a drink and a curry. Diana

**Saturday 12 February 10.30**

**Bridge over the River Colne**

**Bushey Station** Starting with the proposed new bridge over the River Colne in Oxhey Park, this exploratory ride using many off road tracks will visit 20 bridges almost to the river source in North Mymms, pub lunch at the Chalkdrawers Arms or similar.

25 miles Medium David

**Saturday 19 February 10.30**

**Ride to Coleman Green**



**Watford High Street Station** Through Bedmond & Childwick Bury to The John Bunyan pub for lunch. Return via St Albans & NCR6. Minor roads most of the way.

29 miles Medium Roger

**Saturday 26 February Evening**

**To Be Confirmed**

An, as yet, undecided social event which might be a play, concert 🎵, film, dance or meal. *Maybe you would like to make a suggestion??*

Contact Linden nearer the time for more information...

## Looking Forwards to the Spring Programme

**Tuesday 12 April 2011**

**Annual General Meeting**

The **Deadline** for the Spring Newsletter  
is **9 February 2011**

*Any member may organise a ride.  
Please contact the rides co-ordinator:*

# 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"/>	The Bike Stall (Watford Market)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Northwood Cycle Depot	<input type="checkbox"/>	Environmental Fair
<input type="text"/>		Other / Spokes newsletter at other location	

## 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

*"It will be only a step from this for [motorists] to claim in a few years the moral ownership of the roads their contributions have created."*

Winston Churchill on his opposition to 'road tax'

*"When I was a kid I used to pray every night for a new bicycle. Then I realised that the Lord doesn't work that way so I stole one and asked Him to forgive me."*

Emo Philips

# 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

**Northwood Cycle Depot** 01923 824174  
118 Pinner Road, Northwood

**10% off food & drink at the Café in the Park** 08456 800835  
The Aquadrome, Frogmoor Lane, Rickmansworth, WD3 1NB

# ***CAMPAIGN TO SAVE CYCLING!***

**from [www.cyclenation.org.uk](http://www.cyclenation.org.uk)**

With the new Government now making or contemplating significant cuts to public expenditure, many initiatives that are increasing the popularity of cycling and the number of cyclists are now under threat. The funding for 'Cycling England' may be cut, plus its successful cycle training programme 'Bikeability'.

Cyclenation and the Cambridge Cycling Campaign have mounted a NATIONAL CAMPAIGN to save 'Cycling England' and a dedicated web site <http://www.savecyclingengland.org/> has been set up. The site features 'Save Bikeability and Cycling England' – an open letter to the Secretary of State Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP and highlights the many benefits of cycling that would be threatened by funding cuts.

Plus, Britain's leading transport commentator, Christian Wolmar, has written an 'open letter' to the minister for cycling (amongst other things) Norman Baker: "Norman: Save cycling money! See <http://www.christianwolmar.co.uk/2010/09/norman-save-cycling-money/> But above all, we are asking our campaigning groups, yes, that means all of you, dear readers, to contact your MPs and urge them to support the CycleNation/Cambridge CC campaign.

In a two-page spread for the June-July 2010 'Local Transport Today', 'Cycling England' chairman Phillip Darnton suggests that continued funding for cycling will pay for itself several times over and adds: "My impression is that cycling has become a non-political party football - the idea that it is a good investment has played very strongly". And in a similar two-pager in the same LTT, the aforementioned Norman Baker is enthused by his remit to promote "alternatives to travel" which, he says further down the piece, includes: "making sure you've got the ability to hire bikes".



## Belgium Revisited by Dennis

Following a couple of very pleasant cycle tours in Flanders (the Dutch speaking north of Belgium) Yvonne and I decided to try Wallonia (the French speaking south). The tourist office in London proved to be very helpful, sending us maps of cycle routes, lists of accommodation and bike hire details. We chose Namur, the capital of Wallonia as our starting point, travelling there via Eurostar and Belgian rail. (Onward travel from Brussels was free.) As we emerged from the station we saw our hotel across the road and the bike hire shop 20 metres to our right. The bikes were made by Granville, not a name I know but quite acceptable hybrids with 6 or 7 gears and V brakes. The brakes on the continent are reversed from ours i.e. front brake on the left which could cause problems if any heavy braking was to be done but we were fine.

On our first day of riding we cycled east along the river Meuse, a major highway with many very large cargo boats. We were in the shade of towering Limestone cliffs and there were several quarries across the river from us, interesting but not intrusive industry. We visited Andenne, a pleasant riverside town and returned to Namur for another night. Namur is a pleasant and interesting historic city at the junction of the Sambre and Meuse rivers. We picked Namur as our starting point as it was on the crossing of two dedicated cycle paths called Ravels which are mainly traffic free and said to have no hills greater than 4%. The Ravels tended to use well surfaced riverside and railway paths.

Our second day found us riding south along the Meuse to a chambre d'hôte (B & B) in Dinant, a town situated beneath another towering limestone cliff and birthplace of Adolphe Sax the inventor of you know what. By visiting suitable establishments we confirmed that the beer and food in Belgium is still as good as we remember it and the people are just as friendly and helpful as in Flanders. On the next day we continued along the river to Hermeton and then turned off on an old railway path to Mariembourg where there was a major assembly of railway buffs attending a steam fair. After circling the village several times we found a sort of student hostel/sports centre to stay in.

On Sunday morning we stocked up at the local boulangerie and market with food for the day. This was a wet miserable day and we were not happy cycling up the busy N5. We turned off into the woods, trying to find a cycle path without success. We had to return to cross the main road and

find small local roads to travel on. We were in luck. At Philipville we found a bar that had just barbequed a pig and a hotel with hot radiators on which to drape our damp clothes.

Our next destination was the historic town of Thuin on the river Sambre where two young women in the tourist office spent about half an hour locating a chambre d'hôte for us. That evening I noticed that a very tasty brown beer that I was drinking was 8%. That is about 2.5 times stronger than my local tippie.

We were now on the way back to our starting point and planned to stop halfway to Namur. No such luck. According to my information the village of Florelle had two chambre d'hôtes. One had disappeared; the other was about 3 km up a very large hill and proved to be full. The river Sambre proved to be far less attractive than the Meuse. The first 10km or so were fairly uninteresting and much of the rest was lined with very heavy (but defunct) industry. We passed through Charleroi which sounds very romantic but which proved to be a very dirty disorganised city which I learned is the poorest and most crime ridden area of Belgium. On many occasions the path was blocked and we had difficulty finding the route. We were sure we would find accommodation in Namur but again we were out of luck. Fortunately on our first day's riding we had noticed a Best Western hotel halfway to Andenne, 6km from Namur and the helpful desk clerk in Namur secured their last room for us. I have toured many times in many countries and this was the closest I have been to sleeping under a hedge. We returned to Namur and handed in our bikes.

We had a pleasant holiday but I would not tour in Wallonia again. The tourist office was very helpful and the maps they supplied enabled us to find our way around. The bikes we had were fine and everyone we met was friendly. However the claim to be bike friendly was not really borne out. The paths were quite often blocked and on the routes we took there were very few bars, cafes, hotels and chambre d'hôtes.

Our next cycling holiday in Belgium will be back in Flanders.





Family ride on 24<sup>th</sup> October starting from  
St John's school in Mill End.  
We stopped at John's memorial seat on the Ebury Way  
where Maureen planted some spring bulbs.  
We continued along the canal, then back to the  
Aquadrome café for refreshments

