

00 **DCTOBER / NOVEMBER**

HARTINGTON WEEKEND

by Peter H

Over the weekend of 24-26 June over 20 Spokes members gathered at Hartington Youth Hostel in the Peak District for a weekend of cycling in the wonderfully scenic Derbyshire countryside. The weekend came about at the suggestion of member Mary-Ann who recently moved from Oxhey to the Peak District and was keen to show off her new cycling territory.

She did us proud by devising a selection of routes to suit riders of all abilities.

For better or for worse the spectacular scenery comes at a price – the hills! Some cyclists love hills and others hate them. If the vigour with which the



Spokes riders tackled the hills is anything to go by then most members appear to love them! Even if some riders could have done without ascents



The weekend got off to a good start with a late afternoon / early evening ride on the Friday which Roger put together for early arrivals at the hostel. This was a brisk ride to Longnor and back via an interesting

such as the climb from Ilam to Thorpe, long, fast and effortless descents with magnificent views such as that proffered by the twisting road from Mere Hill to the Manifold valley made the pain of ascent more than worthwhile.



circular route with a few modest hills to break us in.

On Saturday the group split into two rides with everyone riding together down the Manifold Trail to 11's at Waterhouses. The trail is Sustrans National Route 54 and follows a former railway and affords delightfully

easy cycling with prolific greenery and wild flowers on both sides. After 11's the group split into two to give a short ride and long ride option. The longer ride went up and over Mere Hill to lunch at the National Trust's Ilam Hall and then over the flank of Thorpe Cloud across to the Tissington Trail, another former railway, which leads back to within a few miles of Hartington. The shorter ride went back up the Manifold Trail and then enjoyed a very pleasant sojourn in a café with live jazz.



On Sunday we again split into a short ride and a long ride. The long ride, which I went with, went down to Parwich and then across to the High Peak Trail another old railway route which is now Sustrans National Route 68. Parwich is a delightfully unspoilt quintessentially English village immaculately kept and which looks as though time has stood still. Unfortunately the feeling of peace and relaxation it gives is quickly shattered by a steep and sustained hill leading out of it!

Shortly before lunch Steve and I found ourselves ahead of the group and were therefore first along a 'green lane' which links the Tissington Trail to tarmac lanes leading to Youlgrave. It was just as well we both had mountain bikes because the green lane proved very tricky with lots of large stones, humps, hollows and deep ruts. At one point Steve managed to do a very elegant but unintended flip off his bike followed by bounce off his rump in a deep muddy puddle. Luckily the other riders, some of whom had relatively light bikes and heavy luggage, were still on the Tissington Trail and they phoned to find out where we were. Steve kindly took the opportunity to warn them about the hostile track and suggested they choose an easier route.

We had lunch in the Youth Hostel in Youlgrave which runs a café service during the day and which provided a useful washbasin for Steve to clean off the worst of the mud from his shorts! It was a great weekend. Not only was the cycling very enjoyable, Hartington Youth Hostel is very comfortable and offers a restaurant style meal service complete with licensed bar! The YHA has moved a long way since the days of catering primarily for youngsters living on pocket money budgets!

Derbyshire County Council and Sustrans have done a brilliant job in setting up cycle routes and there are cycle hire depots scattered around. Linden and I took advantage of the cycle hire facility at Parsley Hay, a modest walk away from Hartington. We were both given good quality mountain bikes, which fitted well, and they provided us with a puncture outfit, spare tube, pump and lock at no extra charge. This meant we could enjoy travelling to and from Hartington by train and bus which gave some relaxation time either side of the rigours of the cycling!

Vince's View by Vince

We arrived at Hartington Hall on Friday at 15.00; by 16.30 we were exploring the area around Hulme End.

Saturday saw us splitting into 2 groups; Diana, Brian, Linden and myself enjoyed the beautiful Manifold Valley and a jazz session at mid-point.

On Sunday the weather was glorious and we all cycled along the High Peak Trail.

The weekend was a great success. The leadership was benign and generally we all stuck together. With 21 in our group it could have been very strict and constrained. However most members were mature, independent and not in need of a tight lead. That said our chairman can be clear and direct when it is necessary.

Bakewell tarts aside, the food was not great. We had plenty of opinions on the service, but the location was ideal, with an outdoor animal sanctuary and open-air chess/draught set, concluding the serene ambience.

Thanks are due to Mary Ann, David and other members who put it all together. Hopefully Spokes will organise more such weekends away.



by Nigel June 2011

So how does the cycle hire scheme in Paris (Vélib) compare with the Boris bike hire scheme in London?

I tried out the Vélib scheme in June and found it a brilliant way to explore Paris, although the French don't make it too user friendly for tourists! This became clear at the Tourist information office in the Gare du Nord when I asked for information on the Vélib scheme. They told me that "tourists have all sorts of problems with Vélib scheme because it is so complicated" and was instead offered a list of places where I could rent a cycle. Fortunately I had done my research before leaving home so I knew how the scheme worked and I had also printed off a map showing the locations of the Vélib docking stations in central Paris.

Having found the bike docking station at the Gare du Nord I decided there were far too many dubious characters around for me to produce my credit card and register for Vélib there. So instead, I found a docking station in a quiet street nearby and had my first attempt at registering. My card wasn't accepted and it was only at my third attempt at another docking station that I eventually managed to register for the scheme and got my 24 hour access ticket with its 8 digit code and 4 digit PIN number. Armed with this I managed to release the last remaining cycle at the docking station and, at last I was pedalling! I headed south using side streets and dedicated cycle paths until I arrived at the Pompidou Centre - where I docked the bike. After taking in the modern art inside and the modern architecture outside I headed for Notre Dame. Here I found the nearest docking station was full, as was the next nearest but at the third alternative I used the last available post to dock the bike. Notre Dame was overcrowded with tourists so after a quick look round I decided to cycle along the waterway heading towards the cité des sciences et de l'industrie. I did this journey in sections, docking the bike every 25 minutes or so to avoid the charge (up to 30 minutes cycle use is free). Unlike the London scheme (with its "15 minutes between rentals" rule) Vélib does not have any time limit between rentals so you can literally dock the cycle and re-hire it straight away, which became essential as the further I got from the centre of Paris the fewer bikes there were at docking stations. At an outlying Vélib station I got chatting to a French user who explained that Vélib had abandoned the "15

minute rule" in the face of concerted complaints from users! During this journey I appreciated how much has been done in Paris to encourage cycling. The route alongside the canal used a combination of tree lined, designated cycle tracks and cycle lanes running alongside roads.

On my second day in Paris I had no problem registering for a 24 hour ticket at the Vélib docking station fifty meters from my hotel. Armed with my ticket, I typed in the numbers and selected the bike at docking point 15. Having released the bike it was only when I went to set off I realised that it only had one pedal! I re-docked the bike and searched in vain at the docking station for an option to mark the cycle as being in need of



Velib bike with only one pedal !

maintenance. Whilst doing this I watched other users and realised why the regulars checked over a bike before renting it – the drill being to adjust the seat height, check the tyres are inflated and count the pedals! Having released a rideable bike I set off for *Sacré-Cœur* with the by now standard approach of docking and releasing the cycle every 25 minutes or so.

At the Moulin Rouge I started the ascent to the *Sacré-Cœur* on a

narrow cobbled one way street where bikes were allowed to travel in both directions. This was great until vehicles came down the hill towards me at break-neck speed. I quickly learnt to swerve out of the way of any oncoming vehicles. The road widened and two-way traffic was allowed. About half way up the hill a delivery lorry was blocking the road completely. Despite a chorus of car and lorry horns the driver wasn't moving until he had finished unloading! This was great for me because, having cycled past the obstruction I did not encounter any other vehicles travelling up the hill. At the top I explored the market and narrow streets whilst searching in vain for a docking station. I ended up having to descend almost to the bottom of the hill before I found a docking station! I climbed back up the hill on foot this time and had a quick look around the *Sacré-Cœur* which was thronged with tourists. After taking in the panoramic view of the city I descended through the pretty park in front of the *Sacré-Cœur* and marvelled at the double-decker merry-go-round near

the entrance to the park. Heading back towards the centre of Paris, it was not until I reached the third docking station that I managed to find an available cycle.

After lunch I decided to explore along the banks of the Seine heading east. At first I followed the cycle track adjacent to the road which changed into a dedicated cycle track as it wound through an industrial area of factories, cement works and builders merchants. With docking stations becoming few and far between I nearly had to pay to rent the cycle – well the closest I came was docking the cycle after 29 minutes and 35 seconds – managing to avoid the one euro hire charge by just 25 seconds!

On the way back towards my hotel enjoying a leisurely ride along a dedicated cycle track I was startled to see a BMW 1200 touring motor cycle heading towards me on the cycle track – it appears that some French motorcyclists feel that they have the right to use the cycle lane if the nearby road gets too busy!

Half way back the cycle lane ended abruptly and I found myself cycling amongst car and scooter drivers as they jockeyed for position. Borne along in the general flow of traffic riding defensively I only noticed at the last minute that I was about to join the slip road onto an autoroute.

I got myself back onto quieter roads for the rest of the journey to my hotel. Here, docking my cycle for the last time I reflected on my two days experience of using the Vélib scheme. I had managed to use a cycle for a daily charge of 1.7 euros (by being careful to make sure I used a cycle for less than 30 minutes on each occasion). It is a brilliant way to explore "off the beaten track" Paris



Tree-lined Parisian cycle path

using the impressive network of cycle tracks. Used like this Vélib is a real bargain – no wonder the French Tourist Information Offices actively discourage tourists from using Vélib!

Oh and in answer to the question at the start of this article – I have no idea as I've never used the Boris bikes – but this trip has inspired me to start using the cycle hire scheme here as I'm sure I would discover "off the beaten track" parts of London!



DO YOU EAJOY WRITIAG ABOUT CYCLIAG?

Do you have views on local provision, or other aspects of cycling?

Join the Spokes bloggers team!

We have the opportunity to run a blog in the Watford Observer on behalf of Spokes, so we need people prepared to write occasional pieces about any aspect of cycling: recommended routes, traffic problems, reports of rides, photos, good bike repairers or anything else you think would be interesting. Maybe you just want to have a rant from time to time about poor road design - or you have met a courteous lorry driver!



Ladies tricycle, 15" frame, professional conversion from Giant CRS hybrid. 21 speed, alloy frame & wheels. **£370 o.n.o.** Vince E



SPOKES RIDES & EVENTS SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2011

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 3 September 14.00

Cha Cha Cha Café, Cassiobury Park Easy ride for less experienced or rusty riders – this ride benefits from a high level of support from Spokes members so please join us. 5-8 miles Slow Ride leader to be advised.

Sunday 4 September 09.30

Harrow & Wealdstone Station London Sky Ride – marshal led routes aided by Harrow Cyclists LCC to central London to feed into a traffic free route http://www.goskyride.com/location/london/ One way 13 + 9; Option to return via train. Slow David

Wednesday 7 September 18.45

St Mary's Church, High Street, Watford Ride out to the Coy Carp pub in Harefield for a drink and return via Rickmansworth. Please bring lights for return journey. 12 miles Medium Alison

Saturday 10 September 10.00 - 17.00

A chance to cycle between any of the more than 600 churches and chapels specially opened in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire on the day and to raise funds for historic churches via sponsorship.

http://www.bedshertshct.org.uk/ No official leader but individuals are welcome to participate and to raise funds.

Coy Carp Evening Ride



Beds and Herts

Historic Churches Ride

London Sky Ride

LEC Ride

Sunday 11 September 10.00 – 16.00 Watford Active Sports Fair

Oueen's School, Aldenham Road, Watford Objective for groups to promote their activities so ideal for an active cycling group like Spokes. If you can assist at the first Spokes stall at this anticipated undercover event, please contact Kate for a convenient time. If you have not done this before, it is a great way to encourage others to join. Kate

Tuesday 13 September 10.00

Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green Tuesday short ride. Open to all. Approximately 15 miles Slow Roger

Saturday 17 September 10.00

Lower High Street Station Explore the countryside to the east of Watford on a mix of quiet roads and bridle paths (may be rough/muddy in places). Pub lunch. 24 miles Medium Nigel

Saturday/Sunday 17/18 September

Visit the Turner museum in Margate, then walk to the Dickens museum in Broadstairs. Overnight at a local Youth Hostel. For more information / car sharing etc. contact Vince C

Sunday 18 September

London stage in conjunction with Transport for London http://www.tourofbritain.com

For further details of any support event, please contact the rides coordinator

Saturday 24 September 13.30

Cassiobury Shops, Langley Way A meander around Leavesden cycle tracks and into the Langleys for a tea stop. 10 miles approximately Slow Diane

Sunday 25 September 11.00

A station in London Folding Bike Ride to see some of the sights of London. It is likely that the Folding Society will also be attending with a wide range of folders. Tea at Harrods or by the Serpentine is a possibility on the day. Circa 14 miles Slow

Please contact David if interested in advance or if you wish to use a non-folding bicycle.

Leavesden and the Langleys

Folding Bike Ride



Tour of Britain

Tuesday Easy Ride

The Eastern Loop

Dickens & Turner Walk

Thursday 29 September 20.00

Moon Under Water, High Street, Watford A chance to have a chat while enjoying a curry & drink. We are normally in the rear section of the pub. Diana

Saturday 1 October 14.00

Cha Cha Cha Café, Cassiobury Park Easy ride for less experienced or rusty riders – this final LEC ride of the year would also benefit from a high level of support from Spokes members.

5-8 miles Veronica C

Sunday 2 October

Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire Family ride, 60 or 100km sportive, 20km time trial and the Brompton World Championship are all part of Breast Cancer Care's Festival of Cycling in the peaceful oak-lined roads of Blenheim Palace's beautiful park near Oxford.

More details via: http://www.bikeblenheimpalace.com/ No leader but all welcome to participate.

10.00 Sunday 2 October

Ealing Town Hall steps, New Broadway, London W5 A ride with Ealing cyclists to the RAF museum at Hendon. A great ride across north west London and a fantastic museum spread over a massive site. http://www.ealingcycling.org.uk/

Saturday 8 October 10.30 **Colney Heath and South Mimms**

Entrance to Munden Drive - Colne Way (A41) Based on Ride 17 this easy route goes via the Alban Way and Colney Heath, and returns via Shenley. Pub stop. 25 miles Medium Phil

October 5 – 9

Great films from all over the world involving bicycles. http://www.bicyclefilmfestival.com/london/

Saturday 15 October 10.00

Watford Metropolitan Station Cycle into the Chilterns for good views, hills & a pub lunch. 35 miles Medium Roger

Thursday 20 October 20.30 - 23.30

The Pumphouse, Lower High Street, Watford Traditional jazz provided by Rance's Rockin' Chair Band. Admission £8.00. Diana

Spokes Social Evening

Festival of Cycling

RAF Hendon

Day Ride

Bicycle Film Festival (BFF)



Jolly Jazz

LEC Ride

Saturday 22 October 10.00

Coach and Horses pub, Croxley Green Ride on country lanes towards the Chalfonts stopping at the museum for lunch and back via Scots Hill to Croxley. 16 miles Slow Vince

Thursday 27 October 20.00 **Spokes Social Evening** Moon Under Water, High Street, Watford A chance to have a chat while

enjoying a curry & drink. We are normally in the rear section of the pub. Diana

Saturday 29 October 10.10

Watford Junction Station Forecourt to get 10.19 train to Tring (possibility of GroupSave discount). Coffee/tea stop at College Lake Wildlife Centre (and a chance to look around). Lunch at a country pub. Lanes with some hills. 18 miles Medium/Fast Iain / Veronica

Sunday 30 October 10.00

Garston Medical Centre (Sainsbury's car park) Bricket Wood, Potters Crouch, St Albans & Harpenden. Return via Gorehambury. Quiet roads and some shared cycle paths. Pub/coffee stop in Harpenden. 30 miles Medium Andrew

Sunday 6 November 10.30

Garston Medical Centre Route 6 excursion along the Alban Way to Colney Heath for a pub lunch. 22 miles Slow Vince

Monday 7 November 19.30

Location to be advised

Saturday 12 November 10.30

Garston Medical Centre (Sainsbury's car park) Circular ride through the green belt to the north east of Watford. Mainly off road using bridleways so it may be rough/muddy in places. Pub lunch. 24 miles Medium Nigel

Thursday 17 November 20.00

Moon Under Water, High Street, Watford A chance to have a chat while enjoying a curry & drink. We are normally in the rear section of the pub. Diana

Harpenden

Alban Way

Committee Meeting

London Colney Loop



Spokes Social Evening

College Visit





Saturday 19 November 10.30

Bushev Station Road and off-road sections to Aldenham Country Park and Elstree aerodrome where the new café has plenty to offer. Onto Radlett for an uphill section back to the Toby Carvery. Please be prepared for some muddy sections. 12 miles Slow David

Sunday 20 November **Sunday Afternoon Ride** 14.00 Watford High Street Station Short ride east of Watford. Bring Bike Lights. 18 miles Medium Roger Saturday 26 November 13.30 **Kings Langley to Chipperfield**

Kings Langley Station A brisk ride up Rucklers Lane to Chipperfield for afternoon tea, returning via Chandlers Cross and Langleybury. Diane 15 miles Medium

Looking Forwards to the Winter Programme

Thursday 22 December 20.00

Spokes Social Evening

2012

Saturday 14 or Sunday 15 January To Be Arranged... see separate article

Thursday 19 January 20.00 **Spokes Social Evening**

Spokes Festive Event

VICTORIA PENDLETON'S TOP 5 TIPS

Short video to check Tyres, Chain, Brakes, Saddle and Handlebars.

Follow the Bike Week Videos link on www.cyclenation.org.uk

www.youtube.com/user/TGBBikeWeek#p/a/u/0/MoTaR7pgWQM

Aerodrome Adventure

The **Deadline** for the Winter Newsletter is **9 November 2011**

How To Help How did you find out about Spokes? Web-site Personal recommendation On a cycle ride Library CyclePedia Cycles UK Neale & Sons The Bike Stall (Watford Market) Northwood Cycle Depot **Environmental Fair** Other Why do you cycle? Can you help with any of the following? Organising cycle rides Planning cycle schemes Surveying of routes Legal work Social events Cartography / CAD Newsletter articles / artwork Dealing with local councils Merchandise / advertising Letter writing Other

Quarterly Quotations

"Marriage is a wonderful thing, but then again, so is a puncture repair kit." Billy Connolly

"Few articles ever used by man have created so great a revolution in social conditions as the bicycle." US Census Report, 1900

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 Title First Name Surname Address Donation £ Amount £ Cheques payable to SPOKES please **E-mail:**



Watford Commuter Scheme

Do you work in Watford? Did you know that Watford Council will lend bikes for people to try out cycling to work?

If people do not possess a bike, they may be reluctant to buy one without being sure whether they will find it useable in practice. The Watford Commuter team can arrange for bicycles to be delivered to your place of work free of charge for an agreed loan period. Cycle helmets, locks and high visibility vests are available too, as well as a free cycle training session with each bike!

If your employer would like to be more 'green', save on parking spaces and have a healthier workforce which gets to work more quickly and reliably, why not suggest they call the **Watford Commuter** team on **01923 278029** to find out about the scheme?

Hazard Reports by Peter



The Cyclists Touring Club (CTC) has a web site that is an easy way to report potholes and other hazards on public roads (or canal towpaths) for the relevant organization to fix. If the hazard is not fixed and it causes injury or damage, the web site can also provide evidence which is useful for a compensation claim.

Recently, Hertfordshire County Council has adopted a policy of only fixing exceptionally bad potholes as soon as they are reported; the rest have to wait until later.

So, although the County Council has its own hazard reporting web site, the Spokes Committee feel that it would be better to report hazards to them via the CTC site.

The CTC hazard reporting web site is at **http://www.fillthathole.org.uk/** Please would you join me in starting to use it.

Breeze Network

The Breeze network from British Cycling is all about fun, local bike rides for women, by women – and there's a whole range of support, training and ride opportunities too. The network's informal and relaxed. It's what you want it to be.

Breeze bike rides are free. Getting involved is easy. You can either use the Ride Finder to look for a Breeze ride in your area *(more are being added all the time)*, or if you're interested in starting a group, why not become a Breeze champion?

Breeze is part of British Cycling's commitment to getting more women riding bikes for fun, and encouraging more women to join British Cycling. Together we can change cycling for women. Be part of the Breeze network.

www.goskyride.com/breeze

www.goskyride.com/Breeze/ShowArticle/Become-a-Breeze-champion

A Cyclist Pilgrimage

Mary Ann

Our cycling holiday in Galloway this year was planned around a pilgrimage. From Dumfries, we headed north to the Kirkpatrick Macmillan Trail. Ever heard of Kirkpatrick Macmillan? He was a blacksmith in Keir Mill in the 19th century. When he was brought a velocipede for repair *(they were the earliest bikes which you had to push along with your feet)* he decided to build one for himself. Then he thought he could do better.

In 1839 he completed his improved bicycle. Made entirely of wood, it had iron-rimmed wooden wheels, a steerable front wheel, and a rear wheel that was connected by a series of rods to pedals, which the rider pushed alternately forwards in a horizontal reciprocating movement.

He once cycled 70 miles to Glasgow, apparently averaging 10mph. However, he never patented the machine, which in 1846 was copied and sold by Gavin Dalzell of Lesmahagow.



We paid homage at his smithy, intending to see a replica of his machine at Drumlanrig Castle Cycle Museum, but the Scottish torrential rain defeated us.



Cha Cha Cha Café, in Cassiobury Park. The start, and finish, of our LEC rides



and riding along the Ebury Way



An ice-cream tricycle and one of the many sculptures/artworks at The Grove -

Mary Ann's riding companions at the Kirkpatrick Macmillan Smithy 👻







More photos from the Spokes Peak District weekend





