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CycleHerts
Hertfordshire Cycling Groups



SOUTH WEST HERTS SPOKES CYCLING GROUP



Spokes enter the final kilometre...



WEB www.spokesgroup.org.uk

FACEBOOK

on.fb.me/spokesfb

E-MAIL info@spokesgroup.org.uk

TWITTER

twitter.com/spokesgroup

WINTER: DECEMBER / JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2012/13 ISSUE # 75

Spokes see GB **GOLD** and **BRONZE** in the OLYMPIC Time Trials at Hampton Court

Wednesday 1st August

by David

Team GB's performance in the Men's Olympic Road Races was to achieve a 29th place for GB's top man, Mark Cavendish. The Women's Road Race gained a Silver Medal for GB's Lizzie Armitstead.

British cyclists knew that this result could be bettered and Spokes also considered providing Olympic support. A Spokes supporter's ride was offered to members to provide active support for the Olympic Time Trails on Wednesday 1st August. Although it was late notice and there was a threat of rain a trio of supporters were willing to stir on the team to victory.

We assembled at a train station in Harrow not only being armed with GB flags but also dressed in various liberal shades of red, white and blue aided by Olympic supporters clothing.

The journey to the Kingston/Hampton Court part of the Time Trial aimed to use canals and riverside routes as much as possible and was estimated at 16 miles each way. Heading for Greenford, road works on side roads caused a few problems but




Bradley Wiggins...

it wasn't long before we left the traffic behind and joined the Grand Union Canal near Ealing Hospital.

A quiet route to Syon Park and a stop at the café for a coffee were enjoyed and the umbrellas provided some protection from the only light rain seen during the day. A quick hop through Isleworth onto the River Thames and the next 6 miles were on the Thames Path with virtually nobody else on bikes or walking to get in the way. As we approached Kingston Bridge, only 1½ miles from Hampton Court, we could hear and see the security helicopters and were encouraged to know we were on the right track. Since the time trial route went over the bridge, even with 40 minutes before the first Time Trialler was due, it was very congested with crowds of supporters, officials, police etc. and we walk around the crowds. After a brief quarter mile though we were on the grass kerb of Hampton Court Road with about 5 yards between each person sitting down for a glorious picnic lunch. Nearby pubs were providing plastic cups to help with the refreshment of the cycling fans. The women's finish was just under 2km down the road so this was a great place to watch the time trial in its exciting closing stages.

The noise levels started to rise about 15 minutes before the first rider as the Olympic course car came through followed by a police car and police motorbikes. It wasn't long before Clemilda Fernandes from Brazil rider number 24 came into view. The crowd cheered as she flew by at around 45kmh. The road was very flat at this stage. With 90 second gaps between riders start times, it wasn't long before the next came through. As the trial progressed some riders could be seen catching up one another as the gaps closed or extended. Fortunately we had the foresight to take a numerical entry list so it was possible to work out who was making up time. Team GB were represented by Lizzie Armitstead at number 9 and she received a huge cheer. Timewise though she was 106 seconds behind number 10. Emma Pooley at number 6 was making up time on number 7. Marianne Vos, who won the road race, was 4 minutes behind the previous rider so was not likely to be anywhere near the medals. She was followed only 4 seconds later by Kristin Armstrong of the USA who won the gold medal in this event. Emma finished 6th but Lizzie dropped to finish 10th overall.

The men's time trial was on a different route and slightly longer at 44km. To see the map go to www.london2012.com/cycling-road/event/men-time-trial/coursemap/. To get onto this we had to cycle a long 2 miles going through the women's 1km to Finish overhead banner (photo) to get to a good vantage point in Bushy Park. Although open parkland, Bushy Park contains herds of deer so metal fences had been installed on the road through the park to protect the deer from being hit by cyclists. Or was it the other way around! Viewing was more restricted and the crowds deeper.



There were 37 competitors in the men's time trial against 24 in the women's. We were on a straight section and each rider again was preceded by a police motorbike. All competitors were cheered as they came through. We were careful to monitor the relative times. Fabian Cancellara of Switzerland was the key one to look out for being labelled as No.1; you may recall that he retired early from the tour de France to concentrate on the Olympics. However he crashed out badly on the road race a few days earlier but in theory he would be behind Bradley Wiggins (No.2) but trying to overtake. One by one they came by mostly at intervals of between 60 and 120 seconds but sometimes they were out of order due to exciting overtaking manoeuvres. Michael Rogers at No.10 and Chris Froome (Team GB) had both made up lots of time as had Tony Martin at No.3 on No.4 but Bradley was only 50 seconds behind him so doing well but Cancellara was nowhere to be seen and ended up some 4 minutes behind Bradley. Again there were huge cheers for Chris and Bradley as they shot past. With only 1km to the finish those with mobile Internet contact were able to announce the results very soon afterwards of GB's Gold and Bronze medal respectively.

Well done GB – what a privilege to be there and to witness the success of Team GB little knowing how much more it would continue to the end of the Olympics.

Sadly it was time to leave the jubilation of the hundreds of spectators in the park and what better way to head back to the River Thames than by taking a reverse ride along the Olympic Time Trial route. Scores of other cyclists and pedestrians had the same idea so it was a bit like cycling away from Wembley Stadium at the end of a match. After half a mile the route opened up, aided by barriers still enclosed the route. We saw local residents enjoying garden parties, security teams and Games Makers maintaining the barriers. All of these were happy to wave at these Spokes Olympic supporters going through Teddington to Strawberry Vale. Leaving the route at this point we headed back on very quiet roads to Isleworth for some well earned refreshment at the Town Wharf Inn overlooking the Thames and a toast or two to Team GB and to their supporters in Spokes GB.

For full time trial results, these are on:

**[www.london2012.com/cycling-road/
schedule-and-results/index.html](http://www.london2012.com/cycling-road/schedule-and-results/index.html)**

Winter is a coming! or so one wassailing song goes. Lights & high visibility gear can be very useful at this time of year. Have you heard this before?

We have recently revised the SPOKES Cycling Code, you will find a copy on the web-site & in this Newsletter. When cycling in a group we need to be aware of our safety and that of others. We need to pick suitable rides & have regard for the leaders role. Please read the Cycling Code & help to make cycling enjoyable for all.

Would you like to be more involved in SPOKES, either leading the kind of ride you like or campaigning for improved cycling facilities? You may be good at many of the things SPOKES would like to do if we had enough volunteers, if so please contact a committee member. Maybe you would like to be our press officer or be responsible for publicity!!

Did you enjoy any Sky-Rides this summer? The Watford rides were a great success enjoyed by many. They will start again next summer & complement our SPOKES rides.

Are you be interested in a cycling weekend away, either two or four nights, maybe on the south coast or in Suffolk. Bed & Breakfast or Youth Hostel. Can you recommend anywhere ? Could you organise it? If yes to any of this please let me know by email **info@spokesgroup.org.uk**

SUSTRANS occasionally organises a maintenance ride on a local part of the National Cycle Route 6. Would you like to help keep the route clear & tidy, if so the next one is on Sun 24 March from Rickmansworth. Further information will be given in the next Newsletter.

I hope to see you at the Festive Lunch on Sunday 13 January.

Have a good Christmas ❄️ Roger

SPOKES – Cycling Code

Guidance for cycling with the group

Personal responsibility at all times:

- **A duty of care (safety & respect) to yourself & others**
 - For your own safety.
 - Awareness of pedestrians, animals, other cyclists & road users.
 - Compliance with the law & Highway Code.
 - Making sure your cycle is in a safe reliable condition.

Ride protocol:

- **Participating in a ride:**
 - Arrive before the stated start time.
 - If you have a mobile phone, before the ride starts, get the leader's phone number and make sure they have yours.
 - Carry a note of your emergency contact details on you in a place known to several people on the ride.
 - Have for your bike, a spare inner tube, toolkit, a bell/sounder & lights if likely to be dark.
 - Have appropriate clothing particularly if likely to be wet.
 - Consider the need for water & food and carry what you need.
- **Ride Leadership:**
 - The ride leader is a volunteer. Support them by responding promptly to their instructions.
 - Normally the leader will be at the front.
 - Occasionally it is appropriate to overtake the leader, if you do, keep within his/her sight.
If you go ahead of the leader do not expect him/her to find you if you go a different way to the leader.
 - In groups of more than 8 cyclists, the leader may appoint a backmarker who will normally be, the last person. You should attempt to stay between the leader & backmarker.
 - If you are aware that someone has dropped behind let the leader know.
 - If you are leaving the group ensure you inform the leader before separating.

- **Stopping:**

- When stopped ensure you are in a safe place, making sure you can be seen by other road users.
- If you need to stop, shout “Stopping” and endeavour to provide as much notice as possible before slowing down.
- Do not block the pavement, track or road or make it difficult for others to use, particularly around junctions.

- **Give particular consideration to:**

- dogs, horses & other animals, they may be hazardous
- people;
 - When approaching ring your bell or sounder with sufficient time for people to react & not scare them.
 - Say thank-you when people have given way.

- **Communication:**

- Messages about road conditions and behaviour may be passed back and forward in the group.
- Standard calls:
 - “Stopping” alerts the group that you need to stop for a mechanical fault or other emergency reason.
 - “Car up” indicates that a car is approaching us from behind.
 - “Car down” indicates that a car is approaching us from the front.
 - “Easy” indicates that I am slowing down.
 - “On the left” or “On the right” indicates that there are people, a vehicle or some other obstruction on the left or a rider is overtaking you on that side.
 - “Single out” indicates that we need to ride in single file to allow a vehicle to pass.
 - Hazard calling, e.g. “pothole” or “brick” and pointing to it.

Disclaimer: Participants under 16 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Insurance is your responsibility. **Spokes** does not accept liability for you or your possessions. Your participation is deemed as acceptance of these terms.

If you have any comments or suggestions about the ride please give them to the leader or email **rides@spokesgroup.org.uk**

It is intended that this cycling code will be reviewed annually.

PACE YOURSELF by Steve

As Spokes members we all have a common interest and share the enjoyment of riding. We all enjoy being outdoors and riding the tracks and lanes of South Hertfordshire. We each ride at a different pace and ride leaders try to give a guide to encourage riders to attend those rides best suited to the individual.

If a ride is described as 'medium' or 'medium/fast' it is because the ride leader intends the ride to be at a faster pace than slow. When attending a Spokes ride, do consider the published pace of the ride. If a fast rider joins a slow ride, they must be prepared to cycle at a slower pace. If you prefer a slow ride, you may not be able or wish to keep a faster pace and those riders with greater confidence and level of fitness may not wish to be brought down to a slow pace. Do bear in mind that ride leaders offer their services voluntarily and wish to enjoy their rides too.

Spokes **Meal**

It will take place on
Sunday 13th January at
12.30pm for 1.00pm.

The venue is the **Southern Cross**
41-43 Langley Road, Watford WD19 4PP.

The booking is for the Sunday roast dinner at **£7.49**.
Starters, desserts, drinks, coffee etc. are of course extra.

There is a vegetarian option.



Could members please book a place with Linden
by **15th December 2012**.

Note: a **£5** deposit is required.

SPOKES RIDES & EVENTS

DECEMBER / JANUARY / FEBRUARY 2012 / 13

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

☞ *See the Spokes Cycling Code on the previous page*

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

SPEED GUIDE FOR RIDES

SLOW	a gentle pace up to 8 mph
MEDIUM	average pace between 9 and 12 mph
FAST	faster than 12 mph...

December 2012

Saturday 8 December 10:30 Pre-Christmas Circuit to Shenley

Watford Metropolitan Station A circular on-road route to the café at Shenley Park. Medium 18 miles
Roger

Thursday 13 December 10:00 Elstree Airfield

Pump House, Local Board Road, Watford Wall Hall, Battlers Green, Letchmore Heath, and cuppa in the café. Medium 15 miles
Dennis



Thursday 13 December 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

Wednesday 26 December (Boxing Day)

Transport Cavalcade

The Green or The Boot, Sarratt Annual transport display from bikes to motorbikes, cars to vans, tractors to commercial vehicles. The Veteran Cycle Club usually take part. This is usually a very busy event but the Boot sets up a tent for the hungry.

January 2013



Saturday 5 January

10:15

Spyride II

Junction Café, near Watford Junction Station [101a St Albans Road, Watford WD17 1RD 01923 256776] Joint ride with Central London CTC. Visit places connected with real (*Burgess and Maclean*) and fictional (*George Smiley*) spies. Similar to last year's Spyride enjoyed by 18 cyclists which included Green Dragon pub lunch.

www.centrallondonctc.org.uk/rides Slow 25 miles

Charles

Sunday 6 January

10:00

Take to the Hills

Joint New Year ride with Ealing Cyclists

Ealing Town Hall, Uxbridge Road, Ealing Broadway Start the year on a high with this brilliant ride taking in the highest parts of Ealing at a leisurely pace stopping for lunch and probably tea - more details to be confirmed with Ealing Cyclists. Slow Awaiting advice...

Ealing Cyclists check with rides coordinator

Thursday 10 January 10:00

Denham Circular Trip

Coach & Horses, Croxley Green Circular Trip to Denham with some hills to climb and valleys to enjoy as we travel via the Chalfonts.

Some of the route will be off road and a pub lunch stop is anticipated.

Medium 20 miles

Vince

Sunday 13 January 12.30

Spokes Festive Meal

Please **book** your place with **Linden** by **15 December**.

☞ See separate article for details...

Sunday 20 January 10:30 Harefield and Batchworth
Watford High Street Station Ride via Ebury Way through Aquadrome onto canal and round Harefield with lunch option at Ye Olde Greene Manne on Batchworth Heath. Medium 16 miles
David

Thursday 24 January 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 26 January 10:30 LONDON COLNEY LOOP
Garston Medical Centre, in Sainsbury's car park Mainly off road ride through the green belt near Radlett, London Colney and Bricket Wood. Following a mix of minor roads and bridleways the route may be uneven and **muddy** so a mountain bike or all terrain bike is recommended! Lunch stop at a café or pub depending on progress. Medium 23 miles
Nigel

Sunday 27 January 11:00 Sarratt Scenic
Watford Metropolitan Station Medium pace to keep warm on a scenic ride out to Sarratt via the country lanes. There will be a few hills but lovely countryside. Pub stop possible at Chandler's Cross.
Medium 12 miles
Pam

Thursday 31 January 19:30 Spokes Committee Meeting
BT Building, WD25 7GR. For details contact David

February

Saturday 2 February 10:30 Winter Warmer Morning Ride
Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green Circular on road route via Bedmond to the café at Chipperfield. Medium 18 miles
Roger



Thursday 7 February 10:00 Chess Valley Checkmate

Coach & Horses, Croxley Green Reel around the Chess Valley stopping in Chorleywood village for a cuppa. Slow 10 miles
Vince

Thursday 14 February 10:00 Flaunden and Bovington

Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green Under the Heavens, Belsize etc and stop in the café in Chipperfield. Medium 18 miles
Dennis

Saturday 16 February 10:00 Olympic Park & Village Experience

Watford Junction and/or Harrow & Wealdstone Station

Train journey to Stratford in order to explore the site of the Olympics and Paralympics and River Lea, Hackney Marshes, Greenway and cycling super highway to finish up at Aldgate for another train journey back. Please register your interest at least 24 hours in advance with the ride leader.
Slow 14 cycling miles
David

Saturday 23 February 10:30

Irish Club, Deacon Hill, Watford Tracks and off-road lanes at slightly faster medium pace to Park Street then mainly roads to Bedmond and Chipperfield, returning via Commonwood. With beer/lunch stop. Off-road bikes recommended. Medium 25 miles
Steve

Winter Warmer!



Thursday 28 February 20:00

Spokes Social Evening

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

Looking Forwards to the Spring Programme

Thursday 21 March 20:00 Spokes Social Evening

Tuesday 16 April 19:30 Annual General Meeting

Thursday 25 April 20:00 Spokes Social Evening

Help to Encourage More Cycling

Are you able to encourage more people to enjoy cycling? Would you like to be part of a SPOKES Publicity Team informing others about cycling issues.

As part of the team you could take responsibility for one of the following jobs:

- ❖ Letting more people know about the SPOKES rides.
- ❖ Letting people know what cycle training courses are available locally for adults and children.
- ❖ Writing SPOKES press releases, making sure that the first paragraph of each press release covers **the Five W's**: -
 - What** is happening,
 - Who** is doing it,
 - Where** it is happening,
 - When** it is happening,
 - Why** it is happening.
- ❖ Maintaining a press clippings file and a list of press contacts.
- ❖ Organizing merchandise, pamphlets, and volunteers for our stalls at local events.
- ❖ Letting people know about our campaigning work.
- ❖ ...and anything else that you are interested in doing to help encourage more cycling.

If you are interested in helping, or have some suggestions, please contact Roger at **info@spokesgroup.org.uk**

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 (<i>Watford Market</i>)
<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		



The **Deadline** for the Spring Newsletter
is Thursday **7 February 2013**

Please send your contributions to:

Articles	newsletter@spokesgroup.org.uk
Web-site	website@spokesgroup.org.uk
Rides	rides@spokesgroup.org.uk

*Please contact the Rides Co-ordinator
if you would like to lead a ride.*

How To Join

SPOKES membership is only **£10.00** per person per year, and just **£2.00** 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:

Richard Bulgin
82 Beacon Way, Rickmansworth, Herts, WD3 7PD



Title First Name

Surname

Address

.....

.....

Post Code Telephone

Amount £ Donation £ *Cheques payable to SPOKES please*

E-mail:



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

Quarterly Quotations

"Thus, from the war of nature, from famine and death, the most exalted object which we are capable of conceiving, namely the production of higher animals, directly follows. There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved."

The last lines of the Origin of Species, by Charles Darwin

"Think of bicycles as rideable art that can just about save the world."

Grant Petersen, bicycle designer

SPAIN – THE WHITE VILLAGES

by Steve

Heartily disappointed with the summer with weekend washouts and cool, windy or damp evenings throughout June, July and August, desperate for some late summer sunshine I booked a seven day cycling trip with Iberocycle in Spain. My first choice was a guided tour along the 'Camino de Santiago' in Northern Spain, finishing in *Santiago de Compostela*, to revisit areas I have toured in my teens with family. Unfortunately this tour could not be booked, so I delayed until early October to ride with another tour, 'The White Villages of Andalusia'.

The trip started with a hilly and scenic transfer from *Malaga* to *Ronda* in the south west of Spain where we were introduced to our trusty steeds for the forthcoming week, a choice of Trek road bike or hybrid. All of the bikes were well maintained and supplied with speedometers, small handlebar and saddle bags complete with tool kits, puncture repair kits, padlocks, water bottle etc. but leaving enough space for sun-creams and bananas.

We started with a relatively short but hilly circular ride from *Ronda* up into the mountains, into the beautiful cave dwelling town of *Setenil de las Bodegas*, with houses and shops built into the cliff faces, keeping them cool in summer and relatively warm in winter, before returning to *Ronda*.

Now those who know me will be aware that I LIKE hills! Well the Chilterns did not prepare me for days 2 and 3. Day two took us from *Ronda* into the hills surrounding *Grazalema*, a beautiful village clinging on to the side of another mountain, full of Spanish vitality, and then rapidly descending, (I hurtled downwards round hairpin bends clocking a top speed of 66kmph on this descent), on past the stunning sky blue colour, crystal clear Zahara reservoir, to our first true hill top 'white village' stop in *Zahara de la Sierra*. Our hotel windows opened onto a stunning vista of hills and reservoir, with para-gliders floating over the distant hills.

I had been looking forward to day three with some trepidation but a real sense of challenge. We left *Zahara* and immediately started climbing to *Puerto de las Palomas* 1357m above sea level. This was a climb of 11km along winding roads, rising 700m from our night stop and took just over an hour but was immensely satisfying with just enough time for the legs to recover with a short downhill before climbing again towards *Benamahoma* where we stopped for a most welcome coffee stop, before continuing on to *Arcos de la Frontera*, another hill top town. (Do you see a pattern developing? Everything is at the top of a hill!).

Days 4, 5 and 6, left the mountains but continued to be challenging with undulations of up to 200m climbs then drops, through cork and oak forests, (where the famous black Iberico pigs feed on acorns), past cattle ranches and olive

groves towards the *Jerez* region and then up yet more steep climbs to *Medina Sidonia*. Day 5 passed acres of wind turbines and solar panels aiming for *Vejer de la Frontera* but rather than climbing on arrival to the village, we mutinied and diverted an extra 15km, (15km was preferable to the hill!), to *Trafalgar*, where Nelson met his sticky end, and on to golden sandy beaches at *Los Caños de Meca*. Fortunately our accommodating tour guide collected us in the van and the climb back up to *Vejer de la Frontera* was in the comfort of the tour van.

The final day of cycling took us 85km down the relatively unspoilt Atlantic coast through *Barbate*, then to the tuna fishing port of *Zahara de los Atunes* and onward through *Atlánterra* and *Bolonia*, fortunately with the wind mostly behind us, to watch a host of kite surfers enjoying the strong breezes, eventually on to the bustling town and port of *Tarifa* with the impressive mountains of Morocco only a few miles across the Gibraltar straight.

Covering 250 miles in 6 cycling days with hills and heat to contend with was challenging but extremely satisfying. Shorter daily distances were also offered and help was always on hand if required.

I heartily congratulate Simon of Iberocycle, (originally from Bolton but now 25 years in Santander), for his superb organisation. His directions were accurately mapped out with clear instructions and hill profiles. Our 2 to 4 star accommodation was always ready upon arrival and our luggage there ahead of us. We were each given an informative, well written booklet, giving information about Spanish culture, eating habits, laws of the road, translations, and so many other things.



This holiday sampled the real Spain, far removed from the better known tourist areas along mostly almost traffic free roads. We sampled tapas and wines sitting in bustling family filled plazas but also savoured the peace and freedom of the countryside. Wildlife was plentiful. Birdlife was everywhere. We watched hawks hunting outside our hotel windows. Vultures flying overhead in the mountains however were a little more off-putting!

I could not fault this holiday and would thoroughly recommend it to Spokes members.

Saturday 15/9/12
The walled garden at Shenley



Elstree Aerodrome Ride

This ride took 9 riders up Merry Hill on a slightly damp morning for this fantastic view over Watford. After this view, the climb extended into Bushey where some hidden alleyways were found to establish an unusual route which crossed the M1 in order to access a very pleasant coffee and late breakfast stop at the Elstree Aerodrome Café.

Steve's Spanish Holiday



Saturday 10/11/12
on the Merry Hill path