

SOUTH WEST HERTS SPOKES CYCLING GROUP

Web-site
Version



Tuesday 6 August

Three great men on the
new mounting block at
Bricket Wood Common

WEB www.spokesgroup.org.uk

FACEBOOK

on.fb.me/spokesfb

E-MAIL info@spokesgroup.org.uk

TWITTER

[twitter.com@spokesgroup](https://twitter.com/spokesgroup)

AUTUMN: SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2013 ISSUE # 78

The Good News & The Bad News

Have you noticed improvements to some of the local Cycle Routes?:

- The canal path particularly north of Cassiobury Park has a greatly improved surface.
- The surface of the Ebury Way is improved.
- Caravan Lane has an improved surface giving an alternative route between Croxley Green & Rickmansworth.
- The Bridleway though Bricket Wood Common has been improved.
- NCR6/61 at Knutford Playing Fields has been made safer by removing the sharp bend where the cycle-path passes under Colonial Way.

So campaigning for improved cycle routes does get results.

Now we need to campaign for safer cycling on many of our local roads particularly at junctions.

We also need to influence Watford Council on the future of Cassiobury Park ensuring there is a route from Gade Avenue northward to Parkside Drive with a link across the Iron Bridge to the canal path.

Will you consider becoming involved in campaigning for better cycling routes? We need more people involved in our activities. Would you be interested in campaigning for better cycling routes, promoting SPOKES, or producing the Newsletter? These activities are critical to our future.

It is possible we will have no one producing the Newsletter after this one, as Iain & Veronica are leaving the area. Do you have ideas?! Please talk or email a committee member.

I wish to thank Iain for producing the Newsletter, he has done this for many years, always doing a good job. Good luck to Iain & Veronica for their new life in Buxton.

SPOKES members have again been leading many of the successful local Sky-Rides this summer.

The cycling weekend away will not take place this Autumn mainly because few members said they would participate, but we do hope to organise one next spring.

BASQUE REGION *A feast for the senses*

by Steve

Back in the dark old days of winter, I made a New Year Resolution to cycle weekly, so, since January, the lanes of Hertfordshire have taken a bit of a pounding. Each week through the winter, I have looked ahead to the weekend making use of the trusty bbc.co.uk/weather to see whether Saturdays or Sundays have looked more promising and apart from a couple of weekends when gales got the better of my willpower, I took myself off for rides of mostly between 15 and 40 miles. My bike accompanied me on a trip to Newcastle in February and I managed a day out in Kielder Forest for an icy 45 miles.

I persevered through the wet and dismal spring and early summer, clocking up 750 or so miles. Motivation, (or lack of it), sometimes however gets the better of me with most of my rides being on my own. I lead a couple of rides early in the year for Spokes, thank you to those who supported my rides, but in the main with the weather as bad as it has been, it was a struggle to encourage others onto their bikes.

So, seeking some warmth, and looking for the company of other like minded riders, I booked up another trip to Spain with Iberocycle. Having immensely enjoyed their cycle tour in Andalucia in October, I decided to join them this time for a tour in the Basque region of North East Spain. Now in this region of Spain, everything is like New York, so good they named it twice! So many of the places we visited had two names, their Spanish name and their Basque name. In writing this, I will stick with the Spanish names.

Arriving in Vitoria, provincial capital of Álava, following an extremely early morning flight from Stansted, the majority of the day was available for sightseeing, sampling tapas and relaxing with one or two beers. However, our bikes were available for us, so I took the opportunity to head along Vitoria's cycle lanes, out of the city for a 20km gentle ride to get used to my companion for the next 300 miles. A little fine tuning later, (saddle forward and handlebars back), I fit my Trek road bike perfectly and was ready for the 6 day tour.

Simon, owner of Iberocycle, eased our departure out of Vitoria in light rain, fearing that we would not properly read instructions, (with good cause as it turned out later in the week), and accompanied us to the outskirts of the city at a gentle pace, leaving us then to follow his well prepared notes, 96km, to Estella. This was a reasonably gentle day with only one notable climb of 300m or so, ➡

(gosh it was cold and windy at the top!), and gave me time to get to know my fellow travellers, one other Brit and 6 Americans from Utah. These 'Revolted Colonials' were fabulous company, and all strong riders. We arrived on the outskirts of Estella, to find our hotel, a converted water mill on the banks of the river Ega. The hotel was beautifully adorned with a mix of milling artefacts while the power of the river has now been harnessed for power generation. I awarded the receptionist here, 'Receptionist of the week'. She was very proud of her Basque heritage, was attentive and a delight to chat with.

Day 2, 48km, headed immediately up hill. Only 150m climb at this point but a bit of a shock first thing in the morning and then rolled along, rising and falling through pretty Basque villages, highest climb rose 400m to just over 800m, before plummeting to Etxauri and a gentle ride into Pamplona. Sadly, at this point, I made an error and didn't know clockwise from anticlockwise, with my flock of Americans following me trustingly around a park in the wrong direction. Some considerable confusion later and with local help, thank goodness I speak Spanish, we found our way to the centre of Pamplona and our hotel but lost one of my new American buddies who was too trusting of his phone's Sat Nav. We still don't know where he disappeared to but it took him quite a while to catch us up and reach the hotel. After a shorter day's riding, we had time to enjoy Pamplona and see preparations for the forthcoming Fiestas of San Fermín, i.e. the world famous running of the bulls. An exciting city and worth revisiting.

I have headed this article 'A feast for the senses'. Throughout our riding in the Basque region, I became aware that verges at the edges of the roads, were mostly cut short and there was a pervading scent of freshly cut grass wherever we went. I can only imagine an army of strimmers roaming the Basque region, but we never saw one! Similarly, and slightly earlier than in the UK, privets were in full flower and we would repeatedly, ride into this wall of warm sweet scent. If you don't know what the privet flower smells like... look out for it this summer. It is lovely!

Back to the ride and **Day 3** (87km) left Pamplona towards France and St. Etienne. Simon again led us, by bike, out of Pamplona on a beautiful and quiet 10km flat riverbank route. He then left us and returned for the luggage and support vehicle. Day 3 looked frightful on the tour details, seemingly continuously rising for 50km but most of the climb was gentle and insignificant. Some was steeper and a little more challenging but I was facing difficulties with my gears and struggled to keep in the desired cog. Having persevered to one summit, we started down hill, and I suddenly found my chain snapped and lodged under my wheel leaving me with very little breaking or traction. While the others continued on their way, a quick phone call and a roadside repair by Simon, saw

me back in the saddle within 20 minutes, playing catch up with the rest of the group. We climbed to 1050m (13 degrees celcius), and lunched in Roncesvalles, a small town close to the French border before an 800m descent, it was even hard work downhill as the wind was doing all it could to push us back up, (temperature rose 6 degrees in the descent), into St Jean in France for well deserved ice creams before continuing to St. Etienne. It was here that we noticed the extraordinary difference between French and Spanish cultures. We had eaten dinner and took an amble through St. Etienne for a nightcap. Could we find one? Not a hope! Everywhere was shut up tight and when we returned to the hotel, still only just after 10pm, the bar there too had closed! Perhaps they had been warned about the partying antics of my American counterparts!

Day 4 (76km). Another tough but brilliant day. The 'A' team, (I was part of this team), started with a 11% climb for 7km out of St. Etienne, rising approximately 450m. The 'B' team chose discretion over valour and were taken by support vehicle to the top of this climb. As I caught up with the 'B' team, they were decanting from the support vehicle at a most peculiar Aladdins cave on the border between France and Spain. This shop/cafe was piled high with everything from hardware to souvenirs and was surprisingly in the middle of nowhere. The next 20km saw a 400m descent followed by 350m climb before another 10km long, 500m descent back into France. We found ourselves approaching the village of Sare, where I stopped, camera in hand, to take pictures as the group came through a beautiful stereotypical treelined boulevard. Sadly, the group chose to ignore 'straight on' at a roundabout and I waited... and waited and waited some more, eventually giving up and cycling on to find them scratching their heads in the middle of the village wondering where they had gone wrong.

They will never know what a lovely photo opportunity they missed! We dropped from here and found the Biscay coast, where we were welcomed with the wonderful smell of the sea. Do you ever use Weed and Feed on your gardens in damp conditions... Well that was the smell. It was beautiful. Along the coast road, we headed from St. Jean-de-Luz to Hendaye where we loaded the bikes in the van and left France for the final kilometres into San Sebastian. Great call Simon... this was one of two areas where traffic made riding less pleasurable. A night in San Sebastian was spent bar hopping with bar counters full of exciting tapas. Again, 'a feast for the senses'. Here we met a lovely couple from Ireland who were enjoying some R&R having been on a ride with Simon the previous week.

Day 5, (72km), we climbed out of San Sebastián, led by Simon to Monte Igeldo overlooking the city. Two punctures within the group left me cycling alone for most of this day, riding through Eucalyptus groves, following the coast through

fishing and tourist villages and towns to Lekeitio. Once away from San Sebastián, traffic was again lighter and with the weather at last warming up, all were now in shirt sleeves for the first time during the week, without need for windcheaters. It was a pleasure to arrive first in Lekeitio and spend time sitting on the harbour wall, relaxing and eating ice cream before joining the group later for a fabulous fish meal in one of the many harbour bars and restaurants.

Day 6, (90km). The last day of riding, we continued along the coast, mostly keeping together as a group, enjoying the continuous stream of rises and descents. A tough 10% climb, was followed by a similarly steep descent into the village of Elantxobe, where we cut a 20km corner, and took a boat trip to Bermeo. A brilliant idea and not something Simon had arranged for previous groups but it apparently avoided a drudge ride along a busier road out of Gernika.

We spent a very relaxing 20 minutes or so on the boat before continuing the relentless rises and falls towards Bilbao. We stopped as a group for a fabulous tapas lunch in Plentzia and then a (final) small climb before descending onto the long flat drag along the Nervion river into Bilbao past the famous Transporter Bridge and on to the Guggenheim Museum. Simon greeted us at our final hotel, where the receptionist was awarded 'Least helpful receptionist of the week'. We stripped the bikes of bags, maps and pedals, before finding the closest bar for a couple of demob happy beers.

I spent the week trying to compare my last ride with Iberocycle in Andalucia and this ride in the Basque Region. They were very different. Andalucia had similarly tough terrain with most days finishing with steep climbs to village hotels. The Basque region hotels were all in larger towns or cities, which increased the tapas experience, but made starts and finishes less enjoyable than the easy rides out of villages in the South. I found the roads in the Basque region busier than those in Andalucia and after a days riding, there was little time to fully explore the cities but plenty of time to investigate the Andalucian villages. The tapas in the Basque country were superb but there was less generosity than in the South where a drink would be accompanied by a gratuitous morsel, perhaps tapa of the day, olives or crisps.

In conclusion, as both rides were so well thought out and superbly organised, with excellent hotels, and scenery, coupled with really good company on both rides, I cannot say which was better. 400km in Andalucia or 500km in the Basque country???.... I would jump at the opportunity to do both again, but only once I've tried out other Iberocycle routes. Well done Simon.

Terrific holiday.

SPOKES RIDES & EVENTS

SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER / NOVEMBER 2013

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.

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...**

SEPTEMBER 2013

Tuesday 3 September

10:00

Tuesday Morning Ride

Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green A fun ride on local lanes & tracks. Coffee stop at the Aquadrome. Back by lunch time.

Medium 18 miles Roger

Thursday 5 September

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



Sunday 15 September

London Bikeathon

Royal Hospital Chelsea, London The London Bikeathon 2013 offers the choice of a 100 mile, 52 mile, or 26 mile route cycling to help beat blood cancer. This event, held by Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research, is now in its 16th year and is London's largest charity cycling event. All routes start and end at Royal Hospital Chelsea, where there will be live entertainment to enjoy after the ride. 26, 52 and 100 mile options. No planned Spokes Ride or Team but please let Rides Coordinator know if you are interested.

Wednesday 25 September 10:00

Whelpley Hill

Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green A hard, hilly ride along 'Under the Heavens', Flaunden, Ley Hill. Café stop at Chipperfield. Medium 20 miles Dennis

Saturday 28 September 10:15 Blue Book Ride 10 to Ley Hill

Watford Metropolitan Station Quiet lanes and bridleways into the Chilterns with lunch stop at Ley Hill. Returning along the Chess Valley. Medium 22 miles David

OCTOBER

Tuesday 1 October

10:00

Tuesday Morning Ride

Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green A ride through Whippendell Wood & on local lanes. Coffee stop at Chipperfield. Back by lunch time. Medium 18 miles Roger

Thursday 3 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

Thursday 3 to Sunday 6 October

Bicycle Film Festival 2013 - London

The Bicycle Film Festival (*BFF*) has been a major catalyst for the urban bike movement and possibly one of the most powerful and culturally relevant forces of the last decade. For more details of the London film programme visit www.bicyclefilmfestival.com/city/london/ and

invite others to go with you. No Spokes ride planned but please advise Rides Coordinator if interested.

Thursday 10 October 10:00 Elstree Airfield Ride

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

Saturday 12 October 10:00 Into the Chilterns

Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green A gentle ride on lanes & tracks to view the Autumn colours of the Chilterns. Pub lunch at Hawridge. Back by mid-afternoon. Medium 35 miles Roger

Saturday 19 October 10:30 Folding Bike Ride

Start point to be advised to interested cyclists Special Ride for Folding Bike users to see some of the sights of London in the company of Folding Society and Brompton bike owners. Includes Hyde Park ride with possible stop for tea by the Serpentine. Slow 12 miles.
If interested, whether or not you have a folding bike, please contact the Rides Coordinator well in advance.

Sunday 20 October 09:30 Steve's Quarterly Challenge

Batchworth Lock, Rickmansworth A ride for those wanting more...
A ride for strong medium paced riders using lanes and tracks towards Beaconsfield for a pub lunch. Shorter ride if wet.
Medium 40 miles approximately Steve

Wednesday 23 October 10:00 Countryside North of Watford

Watford Metropolitan Station Slow ride around country lanes.
Lunch at Woody's vegetarian café near Hemel. Some hills, but taken gently. Slow 24 miles
Veronica and Tim

Sunday 27 October 14:00 Whippendell Mountain Challenge

Start point to be advised to interested cyclists Off-road mountain bike challenge ride in wooded and hilly area aimed particularly at the younger members of the group but all welcome.
Medium/Fast (*depending on age group*) 10 miles
If interested please contact the Rides Coordinator.



Thursday 31 October 19:30 Committee Meeting

Watford Cycle Hub *If you are interested in how the committee works or are thinking about joining please come along...*

NOVEMBER

For more information contact Kate

Tuesday 5 November 10:00 Tuesday Morning Ride

Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green A ride partly on the recently improved canal path & on local lanes. Coffee stop at Chipperfield. Back by lunch time. Medium 18 miles Roger

Thursday 7 November 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 9 November 10:30 Elstree Aerodrome Ride

Watford High Street Station Road and off-road sections to Aldenham Country Park and Elstree aerodrome for late breakfast at the new café and onto muddy off-road but pretty tracks through Radlett and alongside A41. Possible lunch stop at end of ride. Slow 14 miles David

Thursday 14 November 10:00 St Albans Ride

Pump House, Local Board Road, Watford Ride through Bricket Wood and Chiswell Green using Sustrans route 6 with stop for a cuppa at McD. Medium 20 miles Dennis

Looking Forwards to the Winter Programme

Thursday 5 December 20:00 Spokes Social Evening

Local SkyRides

Here are some of the local rides you can **book** yourself on... Visit **www.goskyride.com**

Sunday 1 Sept	10am	Colne Valley Road, Track and Towpath	Leisurely
Sunday 1 Sept	2pm	Ebury and Aquadrome	Leisurely
Sunday 8 Sept	10am	Cassiobury Cycle Special	Slow
Sunday 8 Sept	10am	North West Watford Countryside Ramble	Speedy

The Reach Free School

by Peter

The Reach Free School and the Government's Educational Funding Agency (EFA) have submitted a planning application for the school to stay, for two to three years, in an office building next door to Camelot. The building lies on Dwight Road, between Tolpits Lane and the Ebury Way National Cycle Network route (*see photo on back page*). The Reach Free School's website states that when the school moves to its permanent home in Mill End most of the pupils will go to school by walking or cycling. (*If they do not, there will be chaos on the Uxbridge Road*).

According to the planning application pupils would be encouraged to attend the temporary school mainly by private coach. Outlying pupils would go by car and it was hoped to encourage car sharing. This is because, bizarrely, the EFA's Transport Consultants believe that the school will be too far away from where pupils live for them to cycle to the school! I asked Three Rivers District councillors to make sure that the planning application was considered, by councillors, at their Planning Committee instead of being decided by officers under delegated powers. They did so.

Roger has written to the council, on behalf of SPOKES, to suggest:

1. That the number of cycle parking places is increased from 10 to 76.
2. That the proposed School Travel Plan is updated to include Level Three Bikeability Training for both staff and pupils. (*Note that primary school pupils are only given Level Two training*).
3. That a new cycle route is provided along Dwight Road linking the school to the existing Ebury Way cycle route.
4. Cyclists should not have to dismount inside the school's parking area (*as suggested by the applicants*). A safe cycling route should be provided to the cycle parking area.

At first, the County Council recommended that Three Rivers District Council refuse the application on highways grounds. So Three Rivers District Council officers recommended that the application be refused because "The details presented in the Travel Plan are not robust and do not adequately demonstrate how sustainable travel will be promoted..."

The EFA's Transport Consultants replied "...it is intended for the School to open in Early September 2013 under Class C of the General Permitted Development Order. This permits use of the building and any land



within its curtilage as a state funded school for a single academic year..." They also worked out a way of allowing all of the coaches to park in the car park at the same time and suggested that they should be given until three months after the school opens to come up with an agreed School Travel Plan which "considers all aspects of travel to and from the site". The County Council changed their recommendation to acceptance of the application, subject to the applicants' suggested planning condition about the Travel Plan. However, the County Council did NOT recommend that the applicants should pay anything towards the cost of a new cycle route along Dwight Road, or even towards the cost of putting up warning signs about the presence of the new school!

At the Planning Committee meeting, councillors followed the recommendation of the County Council, but insisted that the Travel Plan must be finished by the end of September (*so that pupils would be at risk of road accidents for a shorter period of time*). The school was told off, in no uncertain terms, for not finishing the Travel Plan long ago. Several councillors spoke in favour of promoting cycling to the school.

Watch this space for further news...

Quarterly Quotation

"I was trying to introduce myself as America's woman (cycling) champion, but I said the French word "Champignon", so I introduced myself as a mushroom."

Nancy Neiman, American cyclist

"Wind is just a hill in gaseous form."

Barry McCarty, Pastor of Peachtree Christian Church in Atlanta

**David Cameron,
Sir Chris Hoy and
Victoria Pendleton visit
Watford Cycle Hub**

*Photos and more
details in the next
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"/> CycleoPedia | <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 Winter Newsletter
is **Monday 11 November 2013**

Please send your contributions to:

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

CycleoPedia 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	

Committee Members Contact Details

Affiliated to:



www.britishcycling.org.uk



www.ctc.org.uk



www.cyclenation.org.uk

CycleHerts

Hertfordshire Cycling Groups

www.cycleherts.org.uk



Photo taken from the Ebury Way of an existing cycle access to Dwight Road and so to The Reach Free School. See article



Helen on the Spokes stand at the IWA (Inland Waterways Association) festival on 21 July

