



WEB	<a href="http://www.spokesgroup.org.uk">www.spokesgroup.org.uk</a>
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Issue 79 - Winter: December / January / February 2013 – 14



Could this be you !



## Interesting Time for SPOKES by Roger

I believe SPOKES was formed in the early 90's by the coming together of local cyclists, Sustrans & Friends of the Earth with the idea of organising cycle rides & campaigning for a local network of safe cycling routes.

As time has passed much has been achieved, but we still have along way to go in getting the safe cycling local network. Many of the founding members have relinquished their roles enabling the second or third generation of committee members to carry on the work of the founding members.

Earlier this year two key members Iain & Errol said, for good reasons, they had to give up producing the newsletter & managing the web-site, this made us consider how we will communicate with members & be a effective campaigning organization in the future. Fortunately following our special meeting in October Dave Baldwin volunteered to take over the web-site, Errol has now passed over the necessary information enabling Dave to manage the site, but it will take him a little to develop & understand the way we want to use the web-site in the future.

Finding a person to produce the Newsletter has been more of an issue, whilst several members were interested, as they considered the implications they felt it was not for them at present, probably because Iain had done such a good job in the past. Fortunately Roger Robins has now said he may be able to produce the Newsletter, but not until next year, so for now we will just have an email version.

Many members have stated their preference for a printed Newsletter. I believe the Newsletter is important as apart from informing member about our rides & other activities, by sending copies to local councilors, officials & other interested parties, we are able to influence policies & how money is spent on developing the cycling network. It is also a useful recruiting medium.

## **Cycle Rides**

We are now into the Winter program so the number of organized rides is reduced,

If you wish to lead a ride in the future please let David our rides coordinator know, we do need more people to lead a ride, you can decide where to go whether for a day or half day ride or evening ride in the summer.

Other rides are also being organized by the Watford Cycle Hub [www.watfordcyclehub.org.uk](http://www.watfordcyclehub.org.uk) , or you can visit the British Cycling, Sky–local social groups site at [www.goskyride.com](http://www.goskyride.com)

## Campaigning

In the last Newsletter we identified some of the local off-road routes that had been improved earlier this year.

I have now been informed by the county Highways Engineers that Clarendon Road in Watford should become more cycle friendly by marking cycle lanes, but more importantly by improving the junctions & crossing places, I believe this will benefit cyclists who have to use this busy road.

Hertfordshire County Council has recently consulted on its Speed Reduction Policy.

There has also been a scrutiny on the issue of 20mph limits in residential areas.

Watford Council & many residents are keen for the default speed in residential areas to be 20mph. Classified roads may be exempt. SPOKES supports this policy, which would also be sensible in many areas of Three Rivers.

## Commutating with members & other cyclists

Over the last eighteen months we have considered the various ways for member to keep in touch. Next year we hope to have the web-site up to date with more interesting items & photographs, we also wish to make it interactive allowing all members to put items onto part of the site.

We hope to keep producing the printed Newsletter, but the style will depend on the person taking over its production in a way they can cope with.

SPOKES has a page on Facebook which could be a very effective immediate means of informing other of events & topical issues, even organizing rides at short notice, but it does depend on many members using Facebook.

There must be many SPOKES members who are already on Facebook, please **Like** & use the SPOKES page, put into your address bar [on.fb.me/spokesfb](https://on.fb.me/spokesfb)

I know many of us are suspicious about giving information, but it is under your control, you don't have to put in all the personal information it asks for. We may even organize a training session as many have said they would appreciate that.

The next SPOKES meeting is at 7.30 on Friday 7 Jan.2014 at the Watford Cycle Hub, all members are invited to attend, but the committee has to make the decisions, but you will be able have your say.

*The Spokes Festive Lunch for the Christmas/New Year season is booked at Jimmy's restaurant, Lower High Street, Watford (opposite the main entrance to Intu) for Sunday 19 January 2014. The time is 12:00 for 12:30. The booking is for a relatively early time because the restaurant is likely to get very busy later.*

*The meal is buffet style with a carvery (vegetarian options available) for £12.99.*

*If you would like to attend then please send Linden a cheque (made payable to Linden Sharpe) by 20<sup>th</sup> December. Her address is 30 Elfrida Road, Watford, WD18 0AT. If you have any queries she can be contacted on 01923 460466.*

# SPOKES RIDES & EVENTS

## December / January / February 2013 – 14

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 the SPOKES Cycling Code and the Highway Code.

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

### December

**Sunday 1 December 10:00 Watford Cycle Hub Social Ride - Flying without wings The Pavilion, Chaffinch Lane WD18 9QD** A ride on cycle paths and country lanes to Elstree airfield where there is a cafe stop. This route has a couple of gentle hills on the way out. Medium 16 miles If interested please book for this ride via this link:  
<http://www.goskyride.com/Search/Details?eventid=32290>

**Tuesday 3 December 10:00 Tuesday morning ride Harvester, Two Bridges**  
A ride on local lanes to Chipperfield for a coffee stop. Back by lunch time. Medium 18 miles  
Roger 01923 720143

**Thursday 5 December 20:00 Spokes Social Evening Moon under Water, High Street, Watford** Come and join other cyclists for this monthly event with a chance to chat over a pint and a curry. Spokes is normally in the rear section of the pub. Look out for the Spokes symbol. Diana 01923 221955

**Sunday 8 December 10:00 Watford Cycle Hub Social Ride - Woodside Wanderer Woodside Leisure Centre Main Car Park Horseshoe Lane Garston**  
A steady suburban route from the award winning Woodside Leisure Centre, visits "Watford's best kept secret", stops for tea in Cassiobury Park & reveals some unexpected green spaces, to say nothing of the Leavesden Studios Medium 9 miles If interested please book for this ride via this link:  
<http://www.goskyride.com/Search/Details?eventid=32291>

**Sunday 8 December 13:30 Rousebarn tea ride Watford Metropolitan Station**  
Leisurely ride on lanes and through woods to Chandlers Cross for tea and scones at Maureen's. Other local community groups are being invited to join at the end point. Return to Watford is possible before dark but lights might be helpful Slow 5 miles Maureen 01923 267416

**Thursday 12 December 10:00 St Albans Pump House, Local Board Road**  
Ride via Bricket Wood and Chiswell Green for a cuppa at McD Medium 22 miles  
Dennis 01923 463898

**Boxing Day 26 December Boxing Day Transport Cavalcade The Green or The Boot in Sarratt**  
Annual transport display from bicycles to motorbikes, cars to vans to lorries, tractors and other heavy commercial vehicles No organized ride planned



## January 2014

**Sunday 5 January                      10:00   Watford Cycle Hub Social Ride - Black Jacks Mill                      The Pavilion, Chaffinch Lane   WD18 9QD**

Lovely ride from the Hub heading out on the Ebury Way and passing through a tree lined route adjacent to Croxley Moor and a 14th century barn and crossing over the Grand Union Canal and three rivers. Rickmansworth Aquadrome is visited before reaching Black Jack's Mill.    Medium                      12 miles    If interested please book for this ride via this link:

<http://www.goskyride.com/Search/Details?eventid=32292>

**Thursday 9 January                      10:00   Denham                      Morrisons, Ascot Road, Croxley Green**

Follow a devious route via Aquadrome and towpath and return via old quarry and marina.    Medium 22 miles    Dennis                      01923 463898

**Thursday 9 January                      20:00   Spokes Social Evening                      Moon under Water, High Street, Watford**    Come and join other cyclists for this monthly event over a pint and a curry or one of the pub's other speciality meals. Spokes is normally in the rear section of the pub. Look out for the Spokes symbol.    Diana    01923 221955

**Sunday 12 January                      09:45   Spyride 3                      Junction Café, near to Watford Junction Station [101a St Albans Rd, Watford WD17 1RD**

Joint ride with Central London CTC. A repeat of last year's popular Spyride. Visit places connected with real (Burgess and Maclean) and fictional (George Smiley) spies. Lunch at the Green Dragon at Flaunden. <http://www.centrallondonctc.org.uk/rides>    Slow 25 miles                      Charles Harvey                      020 8455 5174 in advance. 07961 194 771 on the day.

**Thursday 16 January                      20:15   Pump House Jazz night                      Pump House, Local Board Road**

Come and join the Jazz Club and listen to the sounds of Dave Rance's Rockin' Chair Band. Admission charge of £8                      Diana    01923 221955

**Sunday 19 January                      12.00 Festive Lunch**

See separate item.                      Contact Linden 01923 460466

**Sunday 19 January                      10:00   Hub Social Ride - Escape to the Country    The Pavilion, Chaffinch Lane   WD18 9QD**

This ride heads out via the Ebury Way and Cassiobury Park to escape into the quiet lanes and historic villages on the borders of the Chilterns. Drinks stop at cafe on Chipperfield Common before heading to the Chess Valley. There are some ups and downs on this ride which should be rewarded by the changing scenery and views.    Fast    21 miles                      If interested please book for this ride via this link:

<http://www.goskyride.com/Search/Details?eventid=32294>

**Saturday 25 January                      10:30   Up, up and away to Elstree Aerodrome    Watford Lower High Street station**

Road and off-road sections to Aldenham Country Park and Elstree aerodrome for late breakfast at the new cafe and onto muddy off road but pretty tracks through Radlett and alongside A41. Possible lunch stop at end of ride    Slow    14 miles                      David    020 8429 2882 or 07745018288 on the day

**Sunday 26 January                      10:00   Watford Cycle Hub Social Ride - Woodside Wanderer**

**Woodside Leisure Centre Main Car Park Horseshoe Lane Garston**    A steady suburban route from Woodside Leisure Centre with visits to "Watford's best kept secret" and Cassiobury Park for tea. The ride reveals some unexpected green and pleasant areas.    Medium    9 miles                      If interested please book for this ride via this link: <http://www.goskyride.com/Search/Details?eventid=32295>

## February

**Saturday 1 February 10:00 Winter Ride Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley Green**  
A ride on local lanes though Aldenham & Letchmore Heath to Elstree for coffee. Back around lunch time. Medium 16 miles Roger 01923 720143

**Friday 7 February 7.30 SPOKES Meeting Watford Cycle Hub**

**Sunday 9 February 9:30 Ivinghoe Beacon Woodside Leisure Centre, Horseshoe Lane Garston**  
Ride to Berkhamsted, Ashridge, Ivinghoe possibly visiting the visitors centre at Dunstable. Returning via Tring, Northchurch etc. Rain will definitely stop play. Medium 40 miles  
Roger R 01923 6750033 or mobile 07952 339473

**Thursday 13 February 10:00 Elstree airfield Pump House, Local Board Road**  
Ride via Wall Hall, Aldenham and Battler's Green for a cuppa at the airfield cafe. Medium 17 miles  
Dennis 01923 463898

**Thursday 13 February 20:00 Spokes Social Evening Moon under Water, High Street, Watford**  
Come and join other cyclists for this monthly event with a chance to chat over a pint and a curry. Spokes is normally in the rear section of the pub within reach of a Spokes symbol.  
Diana 01923 221955

**Saturday 15 February 10:30 Dumb Bell Exercise Ride Bushey Railway Station**  
Gentle ride along Ebury way to the Dumb Bell at Horn Hill for lunch, returning via Chandlers Cross and Whippendell Wood. Some hilly off road sections. Massage chair available at lunch stop for those needing rejuvenation. Medium 17 Miles David 020 8429 2882 or 07745018288 on the day

**Watford Cycle Hub** [office@watfordcyclehub.org.uk](mailto:office@watfordcyclehub.org.uk)

The pavilion, Chaffinch Lane, Watford, WD18 9QD

01923 223 994 07818-047-838

### **Women's Only Maintenance sessions**

Thurs 5th Dec 6.30-9pm & Sunday 8th Dec 10am-12.30pm Dec

### **Get me home**

Sunday 8th Dec 1.30-4pm & Thurs 12th Dec

### **Take care of my bike**

Cost is £45 for both sessions though people can mix and match which sessions they go to but must attend both.

**10 Pick & Mix Maintenance Modules** held on Thurs evening starts on 9th January.

## Committee Members

Chairperson <a href="mailto:info@spokesgroup.org.uk">info@spokesgroup.org.uk</a>	Roger Bangs	01923 720143
Treasurer and Honorary President <a href="mailto:treasurer@spokesgroup.org.uk">treasurer@spokesgroup.org.uk</a>	Pam Mann	01494 723024
Meetings Secretary <a href="mailto:mail@lindensharpe.name">mail@lindensharpe.name</a>	Linden Sharpe	01923 460466
Membership Secretary <a href="mailto:membership@spokesgroup.org.uk">membership@spokesgroup.org.uk</a>	Richard Bulgin	01923 776143
Rides Co-ordinator <a href="mailto:rides@spokesgroup.org.uk">rides@spokesgroup.org.uk</a>	David Turner	0208 4292882
Newsletter Producer <a href="mailto:newsletter@spokesgroup.org.uk">newsletter@spokesgroup.org.uk</a>		01923
Web-site Manager <a href="mailto:website@spokesgroup.org.uk">website@spokesgroup.org.uk</a>	Dave Baldwin	01923
Watford Cycle Hub <a href="mailto:timme.jenkins@ntlworld.com">timme.jenkins@ntlworld.com</a> <a href="mailto:kate@watfordcyclehub.org.uk">kate@watfordcyclehub.org.uk</a>	Kate Jenkins	01923 448728 01923 223994
Hazard Reporting <a href="mailto:hazards@spokesgroup.org.uk">hazards@spokesgroup.org.uk</a>	Peter Loader	01923 712655
Vice Chairperson	<i>position vacant</i>	
Publicity & Promotion	<i>position vacant</i>	

If you are interested in promoting, encouraging or leading any SPOKES activities please consider joining the committee. Contact the Chair or any other committee member.

## Lanzarote - Land of Volcanoes

Although a Spanish island, Lanzarote is as far from Madrid, the capital of Spain, as we are in London, and is actually off the coast of Africa, west of Morocco and the Western Sahara. So although Spanish temperatures by November are cooling off, the Canary Islands bask in average temperatures of 23-25 degrees throughout the winter months.



So deciding to complete my goal of 2013 miles cycled during 2013, and to take advantage of some warmth and sunshine, I booked another trip with [www.iberocycle.com](http://www.iberocycle.com).

Arriving in Arrecife after a four hour flight from Gatwick, the sun was disappearing over the horizon. Escaping the confines of the airport, visitors are greeted with the smell of tropical warmth and while waiting for taxis, can only marvel at the gargantuan size and variety of cacti filling the airport garden. Neither can visitors, especially cyclists, fail to be aware of the strength of the seemingly constant north easterly wind.

A 15 minute taxi ride to Costa Tegui and first impressions suggest the island is still a building site although these thoughts are quickly dispelled once beyond Costa Tegui and cycling gets under way the next day. Happily Simon from Iberocycle has again found reasonably quiet roads away mostly from the main arteries of the island.

Having got to know my fellow Iberocyclists over drinks and a meal the previous evening, we walked to an adjoining hotel where it had been arranged for us to collect our hire bikes. These were well maintained Scott hybrid bikes fitted with an array of bags and map holders. Sadly there was no odometer, so although Simon provided us with accurate route notes complete with cumulative and individual distances between points, these were somewhat superfluous. We could only guess how far we had travelled. However with relatively few roads on the island, it would have been quite difficult to go wrong, especially as Simon was playing sweeper, cycling with us to keep the flock on the right track.

Our group consisted a Russian, an Irishman, myself and another guy from the UK and we were joined by a Vietnamese American later in the tour. Accompanying us by bike and not this time in a van, was Simon.



Day 1, in light rain and strong winds, took us north of Costa Tegui towards the Mirador del Río, a view point overlooking an expanse of water between Lanzarote and the island of La Graciosa. The early part of the ride was reasonably flat, passing El Jardín de Cactus and on towards Los Jameos del Agua. Both attractions were designed by the celebrated sculptor César Manrique who worked in the island throughout his life. Although we did not visit the Cactus Gardens, we did stop at Los Jameos del Agua, a cavern



formed by volcanic flow and filled with water in which albino blind crabs can be seen. Call me a sceptic but none of the crabs moved, leaving me wondering if they were real or painted on the lagoon floor! This was also however an interesting museum describing the volcanic activities of the island. On with the cycling we continued up the coast for a lunch time stop in Órzola when the sun at last came out and waterproofs could be packed away. The hill started here! We left Órzola and climbed 450m in 10 kilometers. Not to be disgraced, we were congratulated by another cyclist, (he runs a cycle shop in Streatham), who pursued us up the hill, on a much lighter road bike. Having commented that we were tough to catch up with, he peeled off to go back down the hill while we continued upwards towards Haría, a small and quiet village away from the coast for our next night stop. Some excitement in the latter part of the days riding as the wind was ferocious and it was a struggle beyond the Mirador del Río to keep the bike on the road.



The second day of riding found us in much warmer and more pleasant conditions... definitely shorts and T shirt weather. We started with another climb to another vantage point eventually peaking at another viewpoint overlooking a desert like plain running through the middle of the island. A little hazy so the views could have been so much better, but the volcanoes in the south of the island were plainly visible. We dropped from here for a lunch stop in Teguise, (the old capital of the island) before riding on, (one or two climbs later), past a one-time residence of Omar Sharif. (He apparently famously lost this stunning property, built into the volcanic flow, in a game of bridge). This too was designed by Manrique. We continued towards our next two night stop in La Florida, passing the Fundación de Manrique, a museum and art gallery celebrating Manrique's works in the home where he once lived.

Our first night in Hotel Finca La Florida was somewhat special. We had the place mostly to ourselves and the restaurant staff were welcoming and entertaining. A fabulous evening meal, a nights rest, then breakfast and we were fully fuelled for another days riding. A circular route took us mostly downhill, towards the Playa de Famara beneath the volcanic cliffs we had climbed the previous day. I fixed a puncture at this point while Simon took the opportunity for a dip in the sea. I can't say that I was greatly keen on the idea of swimming as cycling in salty soggy cycle shorts really did not appeal! A coffee stop in Caleta de Famara preceded our next climb to Soo, a descent to La Santa, and then a climb through Tinajo, Tajaste and Mancha Blanca before heading back towards La Florida. A long and very pleasant lunch stop at the Casa Museo del Campesino, (more Manrique), then back to the hotel for an early finish and a swim in the pool. Our Irish rider, Mike, took the early finish opportunity to pop in to the local village, San Bartolomé, to have his hair cut. Sadly, he took a wrong turning and, not recognising the previous days route, found himself back at the Fundación de Manrique, before realising his mistake and turning around, adding at least 20km to his tally for the day. Apparently Mike does have a track record for getting lost... On a previous Iberocycle ride in Rhonda (Andalucia), following an evening out, he had got hopelessly lost and could not remember the name or the location of the hotel. He attempted to phone Simon for help, but failed to raise him and apparently did not find the hotel until 4.00 in the morning. The moral of this story... Don't rely on Mike for directions!

Day four, we cycled into the volcanic region covering most of the south of the island. The vistas were spectacular but anything but pretty. I think you could say that of most of the island. There is so little vegetation anywhere on the island. But in the volcanic south there is mile upon mile of black flow. In some areas the black is dust and gravel. In others the black is gigantic boulders and craggy rock. The landscape seemed to have meditative qualities and cycling mostly alone today, I enjoyed the silence and emptiness and became lost in my thoughts. A diversion from the main road, took me up Timanfaya. This volcano is still active and is promoted as a tourist attraction.

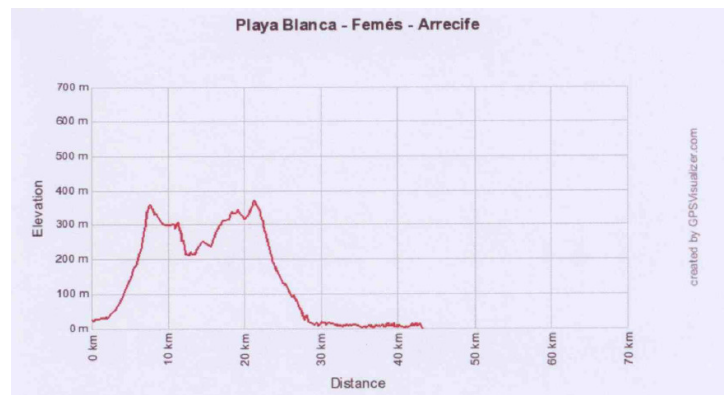
To demonstrate the heat still coming from the volcano, visitors are given handfuls of surprisingly hot gravel to hold and are shown bracken self igniting. We also watched water being poured down tubes, erupting moments later like geysers. Meanwhile the visitor centre restaurant serves chicken and kebabs cooked over the heat of the volcano. A 40 minute bus trip from here takes visitors high into the volcanic area with views down into the many craters.

Continuing on my way, I cycled towards El Golfo, a coastal village surrounded by volcanic flow and well known for its fish restaurants. A superb octopus salad lunch, before continuing along a dramatic volcanic coast road towards Playa Blanca and another two night stop.



An optional day of cycling saw us in Fuerteventura on day 5. A ferry trip took us to Corralejo, a bustling town in the north east of the island where we set off down the east coast with a gentle tail wind for the first 20km. We cycled through an area of beautiful white sand dunes before climbing from sea level up to over 300m on quiet, almost unused roads to Vallebrón. Although this island is not as colourless as Lanzarote, Fuerteventura is still barren and windswept with little vegetation and few trees. Dropping from the summit, we headed north east again, the tail wind became a headwind, through La Oliva and Lajares and back to Corralejo.

We were given a choice again on the final riding day. My masochistic choice was to climb from Playa Blanca to Femés. This route climbed from sea level to 350m in about 7.5km. This was vicious! (The others had more sense and took a more gentle, but slightly longer, route). Contending with a significant gradient and fighting a strong head wind, the first kilometres were tough but manageable. The final kilometre however must have climbed at a rate of 1:8. Simon had described the hill as ‘excruciating’ and if it had been any longer, I would have agreed. I deserved the cup of tea taken at the summit, together with the complimentary banana given to me by the bar



owner. Nice touch!

Back on the road, the headwind prevented enjoyment of the downhill. I rejoined the route the others were taking and did not know whether I was in front or behind them so continued on my way through the vineyard area of La Geria. There were opportunities to stop and sample wines from the numerous bodegas along the route, but sadly, my preference is beer.

Finally a respite from the wind took us directly east with a rapid descent to Puerto Del Carmen where we joined a cycle path running northwards (and back into the wind), towards Playa Honda and on to our final destination of Arrecife.

I have never been a fan of the Canary Islands. Unfortunately, as there were insufficient riders wishing to take part in my first choice of ride, Andalucía- Route of the Moors, in October, I elected to join Iberocycle for Lanzarote instead. In my opinion, the Islands have little 'heart'. They are a tourist resort and little more. Yes, César Manrique did his best to put his cultural stamp on the island, but staying in Playa Blanca and cycling through Puerto del Carmen, it is all too evident that this is not the Spain that I know and love. Give me mainland Spain any day.



However, Simon has devised a superb week of riding using the facilities available to him. The slightly shorter distances covered daily in Lanzarote cleverly take into account the hilly challenges and give plenty of time for photo stops and long lunches. And where else can you get warm sunshine at the beginning of November?

All in all, this was another superbly well organized and supported cycling holiday. Thank you Simon.... Next time Andalucía Route of the Moors or The Rioja tour.

## SPOKES DISCOUNTS

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

CycleoPedia 01923 221901  
70-78 Merton Road, Watford

Cycles UK 01923 243707484 St. Albans Road, Watford

Neale & Sons 01923 223916  
26 Vicarage Road Precinct, 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

## Affiliations



SPOKES membership is £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).  
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.  
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 .....

E-mail: .....

Amount £                      Donation £                      Cheques payable to SPOKES please.