



2021 Winter Newsletter - No. 110



Summer memories - riding the Viking Trail

Chat from the Chair - Winter 2021

Summer came and went quickly for me. The weather was reasonable for cycling and **SPOKES was able to celebrate 25 years since it was formed in 1996.**



Above - Anniversary evening ride to the Windmill

We had two well supported anniversary rides. The first on Friday 2 July was an evening ride to the Windmill at Chipperfield, supported by around 20 cyclists.

On the August bank holiday Saturday many cyclists joined the anniversary gathering rides. These started from several locations with riders meeting on the common at Chipperfield. More than fifty cyclists turned up and were

able to socialise and reminisce on their cycling days.

Maybe we will repeat the idea of gathering rides in the future! Tell us if you would support a gathering ride and meeting next year.

SPOKES – Rides for All (SRFA) is another achievement for our twenty fifth anniversary year. The idea from Brian Johnson was to create an online library of local cycle rides. Brian and other volunteers have identified local routes, based on our previously published cycle rides books. These routes are now available for all by going to the SPOKES website and clicking on the '**rides for all**' link. There you can see a list of rides with maps and route details.

For the last two years SPOKES has been promoting the idea of the **Watford Green Ring**. This is a 6.5 mile route around the centre of Watford, suitable, with minor improvements, for safe cycling and for use by other non-motorised traffic.

On a Sunday in October five local councillors with five SPOKES members rode the route identifying the maintenance and minor improvements required. There was general agreement that the route should be signed and promoted, maybe with a leaflet identifying the historic and interesting features along the route. We now wait to see some improvements, which we were told could be made within a year.

The **Active Travel Plan for Watford** has now identified the cycle crossing of Wiggshall Road on NCR6 as a likely candidate for improvement by widening the shared path

(Continued on page 19 (inside back cover))

Current SPOKES Committee

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SPOKES ride arrangements

Booking Rides.

At the Ride Leaders Meeting in September it was decided to continue with the requirement for members and non-members to pre-book on Lets Ride.

Time Estimated for Rides.

In the winter programme the estimated overall time a ride will take, shown on Let's Ride, has been provided by the ride leaders. This will be more accurate than in the past, but still of course subject to the unforeseen, such as punctures and mechanical issues

Ride categories on Let's Ride

For the winter programme the ride leaders have been able to provide input on the ride category, which should improve the accuracy of the categories shown on Lets' Ride. These are the definitions used:-

Easy Going. SPOKES Slow Pace rides, up to 15 miles, flat with no busy roads.

Steady. SPOKES Slow Pace rides over 15 miles with some easy climbing and SPOKES Medium Pace rides which are 30 miles or less with some easy climbing.

Challenging. Any ride with challenging climbs, any SPOKES Fast Pace ride and Medium Pace rides which are over 30 miles.

Mountain Bike. Off-road rides on unsurfaced trails.

Tips on Use of Let's Ride

If the ride is full, do register on the waiting list. Cancellations do happen, even at the last minute. If you also email rides@spokesgroup.org.uk, we can sometimes find a volunteer to lead a second group or raise the ride limit to meet the demand. As we cannot view the waiting list, your emails are the only way we can identify an oversubscribed ride.

Messages to the Ride Leader.

Only the ride creator can see messages in Let's Ride 'notifications', which in most cases is me and not the ride leader. This means delays can occur in replying to you, if I first have to consult the ride leader. The ride leader can, however, see messages in the ride conversation so, if you are booked on the ride, that is a good place to ask your question, the answer to which is often useful to others booked on the ride.

Accessing SPOKES' Rides on Let's Ride.

There are various ways of searching for a ride on Lets Ride, but the easiest way of finding and booking a specific ride is to go the '**rides and events**' link on our Web Site (www.spokesgroup.org.uk), then scroll down to the ride you wish to join and click on

SPOKES ride arrangements

the **'click here to book on Let's Ride'**, link which will take you direct to the ride you have selected on Lets Ride.

Choosing Rides to join.

Whilst wanting to welcome as many members as possible, we recognise the importance of rides being within each rider's limits. Hopefully the **'pace'**, **'time'** and **'ride category'** information will assist you in selecting rides, but it is the responsibility of each of us to do our best to book on appropriate rides.

Unable to do a ride you have booked?

Please remember to cancel your Let's Ride place at the first opportunity and even if you need to cancel at the last minute, please do so. This gives opportunity for those on the waiting list to join the ride and also informs the Ride Leader you will not be taking part.



Peter Jackson - Rides Co-ordinator

Left - One example of the unexpected, which may extend estimated ride times!

Horses and cyclists - Roger passes on this information he received:-

If you are a cyclist, please warn horse-riders you're approaching by ringing your bell or by calling out hello.

When you are approaching a horse on the road from behind, they cannot see behind. They have a blind spot just where you are. Most horses on the road are used to cars and trucks which they can hear coming; but not silent cyclists. Please ring your bell or call out from 20 metres and 10 metres behind. This avoids the horse spooking and swerving. Any swerving could force you into the path of an oncoming car, with unthinkable consequences.

Of course, if the horses are on the other side of the road they see you fine.

Thanks for your cooperation – ring your bell or call hello; you'll save lives."

Spokes Rides and Events - Information

Spokes Rides.

Spokes' members put together a varied programme of social rides. Ride descriptions normally include speed, distance and hills information to help you find rides that suit you. We ride in a group that chats and enjoys a sociable break en route or at the end of the ride. If you are struggling on the day, you will not be left behind. Spokes' rides tend to be smaller sociable group rides. Rides may be added to the programme and details will be added to the web sites and Facebook.

Disclaimer

As a participant of Spokes' rides you must be over 16, unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. You need to be capable of riding in a group on the highway. Spokes cannot accept liability for you or your possessions. Your safety and well being is your responsibility. It is your responsibility to follow the Highway Code at all times. Your participation in the rides is acceptance of these terms.

What to bring on a ride?

Please come to rides with appropriate clothing for the weather, and with water, snack, spare inner tube and pump. Bring lights if appropriate. Please carry something that gives your name, address and emergency contact details and note the phone number of the ride leader.

What if the weather is bad?

If bad weather is forecast, or in other exceptional circumstances, the ride may be cancelled or changed. Unless the change happens at the very last minute, notice of the change or cancellation will be posted on our web site and our Facebook page.

Therefore, please contact the organiser before you travel to the start of a ride, if the weather looks bad, but try checking Facebook first.

Rides leave on time!

Please turn up at the start location for a ride, ready to leave at the scheduled time.

Ride Speed Guide

Slow ----- Gentle up to 8mph

Medium ----- Average of 9-11 mph

Fast ----- Average over 12 mph

Spokes Rides and Events Programme - Winter 2021

Pre-booking on Let's Ride is required for all SPOKES rides.

We would love to offer more rides, and route variations, but to do that we need more **members willing to lead rides**. Please speak to or email Peter Jackson, if you are interested in others joining you on your favourite route/s. The **'SPOKES rides for all'** collection on our web site has routes you can use.

December

Friday 3rd

10.00am

Hub to Hub

Watford Cycle Hub, Chaffinch Lane, Watford WD18 9QD

A ride with **Phil** from Watford Cycle Hub to Leavesden Cycle Hub and back. Outward journey is mainly canal and some track. Return journey via Chandlers Cross is mainly road. A chance to visit both Hubs, stopping at the YMCA café (next to the Hub) in Leavesden Country Park for refreshments.

16 Miles

Slow

Not suitable for road bikes

Saturday 4th

10.00am Redbournbury Mill

Use your loaf, of course you knead to ride with Katherine to Redbournbury Mill.

Outside Kings Langley Community Centre, The Nap WD4 8ET

Circular **'SPOKES Rides For All'** route 46. The majority is on road with short stretches of gravel track. Out via Potters Crouch, Gorhambury Estate to St Albans. Return via Redbournbury Mill to buy bread and cakes! [Link to GPX of route on our web site.](#)

21.5 Miles

Medium

Not suitable for skinny tyres

Tuesday 7th

10.00am

Tuesday ride

Café in The Park, Aquadrome, Frogmoor Lane, Ricky WD3 1NB

Out with **Roger** on road with a mile of good track through Swillet and Chalfont Common to Denham Country Park for refreshments. Return via Denham Quarry and Harefield.

19 Miles

Medium

Not suitable for skinny tyres

Friday 10th

10.00am

SPOKES Rides For All 039 London Ride

Tasty Bean Café, Oxhey Activity Park, Wiggenghall Road, Watford WD18 OHZ

Ride out with **Peter** on this London route, maybe to places you didn't know existed. It is the reverse way around to the route published in 'Rides For All'. Out via Bushey, skirting Edgware to Elstree then Aldenham Country Park for refreshments. Return via Patchetts Green. 929 feet climbing, some challenging. Mainly quiet roads but a few busy sections and junctions.

19 Miles

Medium

Suitable for any bike

December

Monday 13th **10.00am** **Chesham villages**
Ashley Green - junction of Hog Lane and A416 opposite the church. HP5 3PL. (free on-street parking)

Ride with **Katherine** on a circular road route exploring villages around Chesham. Coffee stop in Chesham.

20 Miles **Medium** Suitable for any bike

Wednesday 15th **10.00am** **Bedmond and Nash Mills**
Outside the Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley WD3 3RX

Ride with **Phil** via Rousebarn Lane (unless muddy), Chandlers Cross, Hunton Bridge, Abbots Langley, Bedmond, Nash Mills, Kings Langley, Chipperfield (coffee stop), Sarratt, Croxley Green. 1,200 ft climb with some challenging hills.

22 Miles **Medium** Suitable for any bike

Thursday 16th **10.00am** **Thursday Short Ride**
Outside the Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley WD3 3RX

Ride out with **John** via Two Bridges and Ebury Way to the Aquadrome, then the canal tow path to Springwell Lake, cycle path to Mill End, Springwell Lane to Aquadrome Café or Café @ lock 81 for refreshments. Return via the Ebury Way to Two Bridges.

12 Miles **Slow** Suitable for any bike

Thursday 23rd **10.00am** **Santa Special**
Outside Leverstock Green Library, Hemel, HP3 8QG

Get into the Christmas spirit with **Katherine**, riding to the Burstons Garden Centre, which has a café and a large Christmas display. **Bling up your bike and wear your Christmas Jumper!** Out from Leverstock Green to Potters Crouch and Chiswell Green. Link to GPX of route on our web site.

11 Miles **Slow** Suitable for any bike

Monday 27th **09.30am** **Dunstable Downs - Bank Holiday Ride**
Watford Rugby Club, Radlett Rd, Watford, WD24 4LL

Ride out with **Chris** through Bricket Wood, Potters Crouch, Buncefield, Gaddesden Row, Studham, with a final climb to the Downs. This is a flattish ride apart from the last 1/4 mile. The Dunstable Downs visitor centre has a good café and a brilliant view of the Aylesbury Vale, with the gliding club below.

36 Miles **Medium to Fast** Suitable for any bike

January

Thursday 20th 10.00am Thursday Short Ride
Outside the Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley WD3 3RX

Ride out with **John** via Two Bridges and Ebury Way to the Aquadrome, then the canal tow path to Springwell Lake, cycle path to Mill End, Springwell Lane to Aquadrome Café or Café @ lock 81 for refreshment. Return via the Ebury Way to Two Bridges.

12 Miles **Slow** Suitable for any bike

Thursday 27th 10.00am Making tracks to Stockwood Park
Active Dacorum Hub, Redbourn Rd. Hemel Hempstead HP27BA

Enjoy this off-road route with **Katherine**, out on Nickey Line and Upper Lea Valley Way to the edge of Luton. Coffee in Stockwood Park. Bike lock needed as bikes not allowed in café area. Back on lanes via Markyate and Gaddesden Row. One steep hill and other undulations! 900 feet climbing. Link to GPX of route on our web site.

21 Miles **Slow-Medium** Not suitable for skinny tyres

February

Tuesday 1st 7.30 pm SPOKES Committee Meeting
Watford Cycle Hub, Chaffinch Lane, Watford WD18 9QD

A SPOKES Committee Meeting, led by **Roger**, open for all Members to attend. Find out more about how SPOKES is run and perhaps contribute ideas for the future.

Tuesday 8th 10.00am Tuesday Ride
Café in The Park, Aquadrome, Frogmoor Lane, Ricky WD3 1NB

On road ride with **Roger** through Swillet, Latimer and Bovingdon to Chipperfield café. Return Via Sarratt to Croxley Green.

20 Miles **Medium** Suitable for any bike

Thursday 10th 10.00am Seer Green and Jordans
Café in The Park, Aquadrome, Frogmoor Lane, Ricky WD3 1NB

Ride with **Phil**, out via Chorleywood, Chalfont St Giles, Seer Green to Jordans (refreshment stop on village green). Back via Chalfont St Giles, Maple Cross. 922 ft. climb.

17 Miles **Medium** Suitable for any bike

February

Thursday 17th

10.00am Thursday Short Ride

Outside the Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley WD3 3RX

Ride out with **John** via Two Bridges and Ebury Way to the Aquadrome, then the canal tow path to Springwell Lake, cycle path to Mill End, Springwell Lane to Aquadrome Café or Café @ lock 81 for refreshment. Return via the Ebury Way to Two Bridges.

12 Miles

Slow

Suitable for any bike

Thursday 24th

10.00am

Hub to Hub

Watford Cycle Hub, Chaffinch Lane, Watford WD18 9QD

Ride with **Peter** for a gentle ride. Colne Valley Cycle Route, Radlett Road Playing Fields and Garston to Leavesden Cycle Hub for refreshment in the adjacent YMCA Café. Return via Abbots Langley, Hunton Bridge, Cassiobury Park and Croxley. Link to GPX of route on our web site.

14 Miles

Slow

Suitable for any bike

Saturday 26th

09 30am

Redbourn Ride

Watford Rugby Club, Radlett Rd, Watford, WD24 4LL

Ride out with **Chris** through Bricket Wood, Potters Crouch, on to Hemel, where we join the Nicky Line (disused unpaved railway line) to Redbourn Cycle Hub for a cuppa. Back the more direct route through St Albans, stopping at the Redbournbury Watermill, where bread is made and sold, along with flour and yeast, so you may want to bring a rucksack!

28 Miles

Medium to Fast

Not suitable for skinny tyres

Your club needs you!

More ride leaders are urgently needed!

To find out more, please contact Peter, the

Spokes rides co-ordinator:-

rides@spokesgroup.org.uk

SPOKES Rides for all

Volunteer needed

As Roger has commented in this News Letter, SRFA is a success. It is already being used for rides in our rides programme and by members for their own rides.

However, if it is to continue as a useful resource, it needs keeping up to date, as ride conditions (e.g. Café changes) and route variations (e.g. new cycle paths) occur. We need a volunteer to maintain it. Hopefully we can also expand the number of rides. The big job of getting 53 rides on to the web site is done and checking of those rides nearly complete.

The maintenance task involves:

- updating the routes on ride with GPS, when changes are reported
- plotting new routes supplied by members
- seeking Members to check the new route and, where appropriate, significant changes to existing routes
- linking the checked new routes to the SPOKES Web site



Brian, who set SRFA up, has prepared a guide to the process.

If you would like to do this job for SPOKES, please contact Roger or me.

Peter Jackson, Rides Co-ordinator

Left - SRFA ride 005 'All aound Herts'

Fold up bikes - why buy one?

For some of us, one bike is all we need. For others, having a 'stable' of bikes becomes important (I'm in this camp) and inevitably a fold up bike hit my radar. But which one? I needed a bike which could be left at the office, so that I could get some exercise whilst working or going to the shops. I bought a Btwin hopper £179 from Decathlon. So nifty and comfy. I would ride to the shops, lock it up outside and be back in the office in no time at all. I rode it in London, and it would fit in my car just fine. It was



on the heavy side, particularly when carrying up stairs on the tube, and it was a little awkward folding it, but I loved her. However all along I coveted a Brompton, trendy, light and very small. Bromptons come at a price – the starting price is £1100, but they can cost much more. I found one on Ebay at a price I liked -£700 (since covid, the price has increased) and promised my husband that my Btwin would be sold (I meant it). I picked up my pre-loved Brompton and, readers, it was love at first sight. The folding mechanism is a thing to behold, it really is tiny, and it's a joy to ride. Everything about it is technically perfect. But, and here's the thing, I quickly realised that this is not a bike that can be locked up outside

a shop or in town. This is a bike that thieves want. This is a bike that must go everywhere you go, and whilst it is light, it becomes heavy carrying it with a basket. This was not something I was aware of. It was only by being a member of various Brompton sites that made me realise that this is a bike that gets stolen. I now have two fold ups both of which I love and both do the job. However, only one can be left (locked up) outside. Which to choose? For practicality the Btwin would suit most people, but for sheer joy, it has to be the Brompton.

Lorreine Kennedy

How to pay for membership?

To pay your subscription please set up an annual standing order payable on the 1 July. This will save administration for you and us. Alternatively you can make a bank transfer.

Payment should be made to SPOKES, sort code **20-91-79**, account **63401626** giving your surname as the reference.

When you have paid, please inform the membership secretary by email: membership@spokesgroup.org.uk

You will receive a Membership Pack, including a SPOKES Membership Card, entitling you to discounts of 10% on bike repairs and spares at the locations shown below.

Any queries please contact the Membership Secretary.

<p>Cycles UK 484/486 St. Albans Road Watford, WD24 6QU 01923 243707 www.cyclesuk.com watford@cyclesuk.com</p>	<p>Northwood Cycle Depot 118 Pinner Road Northwood , HA6 1BP 01923 824174 www.northwoodcycles.com northwoodcycles@tiscali.co.uk</p>
<p>Watford Cycle Hub Holywell Community Centre Tolpits Lane, Watford WD18 9QD 01923 223994 www.watfordcyclehub.org.uk office@watfordcyclehub.org.uk</p>	<p>The Bike Shop 66 Queens Road Watford, WD17 2LA 07941 800029 thebikeshop66@outlook.com <i>(N.B. discount discontinued)</i></p>
<p>Ride St Albans 318 Watford Road Chiswell Green, St Albans AL2 3DP 01727 614778 www.ridestalbans.com mike@ridestalbans.com</p>	



Join Spokes today
Only £12 per annum
 £3 for an additional family member at the same address

Benefits of membership?

You will receive regular details of our cycle rides, social events and other activities in our quarterly Newsletter. You will also be helping us to campaign for improved cycling conditions in the South West Herts. area.

Our membership year is from 1 July to 30 June.

If you would prefer to receive an electronic rather than posted paper copy of our Newsletter, please inform the Membership Secretary.

To join, please complete the form below and email a scanned copy to the Membership Secretary: membership@spokesgroup.org.uk.

This information is kept for membership purposes only. It will not be given to other organisations.

1 st Person Name	
Address	
Post Code	
Phone Number	
1 st person mobile	
1 st person email	
2 nd person name	
2nd person mobile	
2 nd person email	
Total subs due £	
Donation £	
Total £	
Signature	
Date	

Stay in touch with Spokes

Spokes Web Site: www.spokesgroup.org.uk

Information about Spokes, its ride events and links to its campaigning.

Spokes Facebook Group: www.facebook.com/groups/178161195994290/

Keep up to date with what other Spokes' members are doing, find details of forthcoming rides, from the Spokes' ride programme and ad hoc rides added by Spokes' members, and discuss or share issues you are passionate about. Invite others to join you on a ride you are doing.

Spokes Campaigning Site: spokesswherts.cyclescape.org

Spokes' campaigning activity for cycling.

Spokes Letsride Group: www.letsride.co.uk/groups/spokes-watford

Sign up to Let's Ride and join the Spokes' Group. Keep up to date with Spokes' rides and invite others to join your rides. Spokes Members may, but do not need to, book on Let's Ride. Members can just turn up on the day.

Spokes Strava Club: www.strava.com/clubs/Spokes_SW_Herts

See where other Spokes' members are riding and, if you're competitive, see how your cycling activity compares with theirs.



Café stop at the lazy llama during one of Roger's regular Tuesday morning rides

January

- | | | |
|---|----------------|--|
| Sunday 2nd | 10.00am | New Year, Fresh Start
Canal Fields Car Park, Broadwater, Berkhamsted HP4 2AL.
<i>Meet by wooden footbridge. Free car park near to train station.</i> |
| <p>Ride with Katherine through the Chilterns to Wilstone, Marsworth and Aldbury. 850 feet climbing. Mainly lanes with short stretches of busier roads. Coffee stop tbc depending on where is open. Link to route GPX on our web site.</p> | | |
| 21 Miles | Medium | Suitable for any bike |
| | | |
| Wednesday 5th | 10.00am | Hendon RAF Museum
The Rutts Car Park (5 + hrs £6.50) High Rd. Bushey, WD23 1ND
<i>12th Night and a visit to the RAF Museum not to be missed!</i> |
| <p>Ride with Peter via Letchmore Heath, Borehamwood, Barnet Gate and Mill Hill to the museum for a look around and refreshments. About 3 hours in the museum. Return via Burnt Oak and Stanmore. 1122 feet climbing. Not too challenging. Bike racks outside the museum, so locks needed. Secure spacious lockers inside for helmets etc. Link to route GPX on our Web Site.</p> | | |
| 21 Miles | Medium | Suitable for any bike |
| | | |
| Tuesday 11th | 10.00am | Tuesday Ride
Outside the Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley WD3 3RX |
| <p>Ride, on road, with Roger to Shenley Café. Return via Letchmore Heath.</p> | | |
| 19 Miles | Medium | Suitable for any bike |
| | | |
| Thursday 13th | 10.00am | Chiltern Open Air Museum
Café in The Park, Aquadrome, Frogmoor Lane, Ricky WD3 1NB |
| <p>Ride out with Phil via Chorleywood, Chalfont St Giles to Rowan Garden Centre Café. Return via Chiltern Open Air Museum, Maple Cross and West Hyde.</p> | | |
| 15 Miles | Medium | Suitable for any bike |
| | | |
| Tuesday 18th | 10.00am | Apsley Ride
Outside the Harvester, Baldwins Lane, Croxley WD3 3RX |
| <p>Ride out with Chris along the canal towpath to Hunton Bridge, up Gypsy Lane to Abbots, along Bedmond Rd, through Bedmond and Pimlico. Dropping down to Nash Mills, then to Apsley for a breather, before the climb up Featherbed Lane (challenging) to Chipperfield, where we stop at Blackwell's for refreshments. Home through Sarratt to Croxley.</p> | | |
| 20 Miles | Medium | Suitable for any bike |

Where can you go with Spokes?



Above: Roger's ride around the Watford Green Ring.

Below: Peter's ride to Burnham Beeches.



Chat from the Chair - Winter 2021

Continued from page 2 (inside front cover)

across the bridge. This will be a major benefit for those travelling between the High Street and the Ebury Way. This crossing is also a part of the Watford Green Ring route.

The **Local Cycling Walking Investment Plan** (LCWIP) is being slowly developed identifying the key routes for active travel around Watford and Three Rivers. This should allow bids to be made for funds from Central Government in the future. If you want better cycling facilities, I urge you to contribute to public consultations when appropriate. You can see both **Watford and Three Rivers** workshop proposals on the **SPOKES website** under the '**campaigning**' link.

There is still a problem at the Rickmansworth end of the **Ebury Way**, where the track is in a dangerous condition due to tree roots and the lack of light caused by the adjacent new development. We believe Three Rivers Council should be able to rectify this situation.



Above - Some of the cyclists at the Chipperfield anniversary gathering

Have you had any issues cycling through the **Wall Hall Estate** recently? There are Right of Way issues, as the current owner has been trying to stop cyclists and horse riders using some routes through the estate. This site was formerly owned by Hertfordshire County Council 'for the benefit of all'. Around twenty years ago it was sold to a private company for a restricted residential development.

SPOKES is run by Volunteers. We are keen to attract members onto the committee who can give time to developing our rides and campaigning activities. Also, as Peter our Rides Coordinator often says, we need, and would like more members to lead rides. It is just a small commitment on a day of your choice, on a route you choose, to lead a ride for others. If you are not sure of routes, **SPOKES Rides For All** is an excellent resource, with currently fifty three routes available.



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<https://watfordcyclehub.org.uk/>

07340 866123

Where can you go with Spokes?



Above: Katherine's ride to Stockwood Park.

Below: Chris's ride to Apsley.

