

U3A Bikers Battersea Park under Lockdown 2 Friday 6th November 2020

This ride was like no other. The government instruction for the second lock-down was that from Thursday we could exercise outside with just one other person who was not in our family group or bubble.

The ride started at the Lido at Brockwell Park but you will look in vain for a group photo. Instead, the eight riders set off at intervals in pairs, along a route known to most, and with an arranged rendezvous at the Peace Pagoda in Battersea Park.

Under a mackerel sky, we set off, following the signs for Cycle Route 25; we crossed Clapham Common Southside at the pedestrian lights, crossed the common and descended the hill towards Wandsworth Road.

This gave us a clear view of Battersea Power Station and the re-building of the four chimneys, the work still in progress some three years after an earlier ride along this route.

Turning left through the traffic-free tunnel under the GWR mainline serving Waterloo, through a small estate, then crossing Battersea Park Road and Prince of Wales Drive, we arrived at Battersea Park.



The autumn colours were approaching their best and the park was being enjoyed by walkers and cyclists alike.

As arranged, the five pairs of riders loosely assembled at the Peace Pagoda. Feeling in need of a warm drink, we scouted around and soon found a kiosk serving coffee, hot chocolate and cinnamon buns. Packed lunches were eaten here too but – as Peter remarked – we had chosen one of the coldest spots possible, being near the river.



Some of our number took a ride around the park perimeter to warm up!

The ride continued, leaving the park near the Chelsea Bridge, passing beneath it on the Thames Path and through the new development at Battersea. The elevated road through the development took us to Nine Elms Lane, past the site of the original Market and the American Embassy.



The river path continued along the Albert Embankment towards Lambeth Bridge and we paused near the junction with Black Prince Road. At the end of Black Prince Road we found the White Hart Dock where barges carrying China clay used to dock. The clay was brought from Cornwall. A deposit north of St Austell is the largest in the world and a global industry began to rapidly develop.

At the junction with Lambeth High Street we stopped to admire the very impressive ornate tiled frontage of the former offices of Royal Doulton, standing on the corner next to the factory. The factory operated here from 1826 to 1956.



We arrived at Kennington Lane and turned left near the lights where just around the corner was one of the several blue plaques in this area commemorating Charlie Chaplin; this one was erected by "The Dead Comics Society"!

This route brought us into Cleaver Square, a very fine example of a residential square surrounding an open space, originally laid out in 1789.

We entered Kennington Park at the north-east corner, rode through the park and crossed over at the traffic lights into Brixton Road. From here we made our way home.

Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to get out on two wheels. However, we missed the opportunity to get together in groups and live up to our epithet "the chattering cyclists". We'll continue to "meet" on Zoom during November.

Here is a reminder of different times, an earlier ride when we were able to take a group photo. This one was taken in Battersea Park, near the Peace Pagoda



Our warmly clad group in Battersea Park in December 2017

Group Coordinator: Peter Saunders

Report by John Clements, 7th November 2020