

U3A Bikers

Sculptures in the City

Friday 18th November 2022

Well, after a wet week, all of us were very pleased to see a dry day in prospect, although with a cold start.

This was the third outing to see some form of street art, this time in the City of London, Joining after an absence of a couple of years was Jean, and husband John.

This exhibition appears each year and the current one runs until early in 2023.

Assembling at Brockwell Lido, a total of 14 cyclists set out after a short description of the route we would take, a safety briefing, and a group photograph.



By way of Kennington and St George's Circus we cycled along the safe dedicated cycle route on Blackfriars Road, with a coffee stop at the busy, popular Masters Café.

Warmly dressed we were content to occupy the vacant seating outside. Pastel de Nata were available to purchase, enjoyed by two of our number. Then we were off.....



.....except that here are the “chattering cyclists” holding a conversation – in the middle of the road!

After some earlier research, the best route was found to be over Blackfriars Bridge – with this fine view upstream - and then along Upper and Lower Thames Street.



From here we headed into the City, soon arriving at Fenchurch Street Station.

The first stop was in Fenchurch Place, the square outside the station entrance.

There we found a collection of three sculptures, *Bloom Paradise*. The items were *Flower of Hope*, *Flower of the Sky* and *Flower of Life*. A very colourful display in the sunshine.



A short ride away in Aldgate Square was *Earthing*.

Human body parts are seen emerging from giant molluscs. Bizarre and just a little spooky!

Across the square in a tree, and easily missed, was *Nests*, described as "aesthetic sculptures and functional birds' nests" which are intended for use as nests.



A brief ride took us into Mitre Square to see *Habitat*. This piece of ironwork presents two different figures when viewed from different angles. Just around the corner is *The Granary*, a sculpture of a traditional English grain store, in shiny red.



Across the road, St Mary Axe, was *Untitled*, bronze castings with an interesting back-story (see website below).

And just around the corner was *The Garden of Floating Words*. It would be interesting to see this sculpture after dark because the words would then appear to be floating in space.



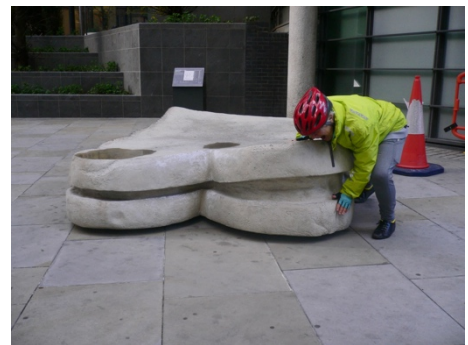
To see the next exhibits we had to negotiate, on foot, the busy junction of Bishopsgate and Wormwood Street. The first was *Burial*, two brown rocks cast from lumps of concrete from demolition sites.....

On the corner was *Miss*, carved from a piece of fine white marble from Carrara, Italy, then after a short delay. - it's a complicated route – we found the way to *Rough Neck Business*, which is assembled from pieces of hoarding from sites across London.



Perhaps *Summer Moon* had more appeal, a life-size sculpture of an ancient olive tree in white-painted aluminium.

With lunch due, the next exhibit had some resonance; this was *Sandwich*, cast in concrete. One of the group was obviously ready for a bite to eat.



Just across the road, *Cosmos* was an interesting piece of art. This was a slatted structure, painted black on the outside, and with a multi-coloured gradient inside. Gisella soon escaped from the cage-like structure!

By now lunch beckoned and so we stopped in a little square sandwiched (!) between the immense Leadenhall Building, aka the Cheese Grater, and the historic C of E Church of St Andrew Undershaft which was dwarfed by its neighbour.



Some with packed lunch found a seat in the square while others headed for the Black Sheep café in the Leadenhall Building. Some said that they were disappointed that lunch was not at Searcys in the Gherkin – the ride notice had said that the lunch stop was at the Gherkin!

Another exhibit was spotted, *We*, a sign in neon lights in the building.

Cleverly, the sign read “WE ARE ALL ONE”, but periodically the “L” disappears so that it changed to “WE ARE AL ONE”. So it asks the question of us, what do we mean by “we”?



Nearing the end of the tour, we headed across to Leadenhall Market, busy with lunch-time drinkers and diners. In a side passage was *Symbols*, an historical display of 30 flag dating from 1978, as adopted by the LGBTQ community.

The final display was titled *Orphans*, a collection of old discarded paintings reconfigured as three egg-shaped bodies. A good example of re-cycling?



The route home for us was across London Bridge, one group heading for Brockwell Park and the other to Dulwich by way of Peckham. Another successful tour enjoyed by the group.

All the exhibits can be found at: <https://www.sculptureinthecity.org.uk/>

Riders

Andrew, Chris, John & Denise, Gisella, Ian, Jane, Jean, John C, John S, Martin, Tony, and David & Irene.

NOTES: I have puzzled for some time over the curious names “St Mary Axe”, “Bevis Marks” and “Leadenhall”; here is what I found.

St Mary Axe was a medieval parish in the City of London whose name survives as that of the street which formerly occupied it. The Church of St Mary Axe was demolished in 1561 and its parish united with that of St Andrew Undershaft, which is situated on the corner of St Mary Axe and Leadenhall Street. The site of the former church is now occupied by Fitzwilliam House.

(The church that we see today is St Andrew Undershaft, constructed in 1532 and a rare example of a City church that has survived both the Great Fire of London and the Blitz.)

The street name may derive from a combination of the church dedicated to the Virgin Mary and a nearby tavern that prominently displayed a sign with an image of an axe.

Alternatively, it may simply be from the church name itself, which may have come from the axes used by the Worshipful Company of Skinners, who were patrons. The sign of an axe is reported to have been present over the east end of the church.

The street St Mary Axe is now most notable for the Baltic Exchange at No. 38, and the "Gherkin" built on the site of the former buildings of the Baltic Exchange and the UK Chamber of Shipping (destroyed by an IRA bomb in 1992).

Bevis Marks leads into Camomile Street in the City of London: the ‘marks’ of the name was just that – a boundary, or something that marked the edge of a property. In this case it was the 12th century mansion and gardens owned by the Abbots of Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. The modern name is a corruption of Bury’s Marks. The abbey is yet another on the long list of those dissolved by Henry VIII.

Leadenhall The present name, Leadenhall, refers to a manor with a large lead roof built on this site. The manor is first listed as belonging to Sir Hugh Neville in 1309. Neville allowed his tenants to use the grounds of the manor as a market place . By 1320 it had become an established poultry market and by the end of the century it was also known for its cheesemongers.

Lord Mayor of London, Richard (Dick) Whittington, later acquired Leadenhall and in 1411 gave the site to the city of London. Over the years the market flourished to provide a site for selling poultry, grain, eggs, butter, cheese, herbs, wool, leather and cutlery.

Samuel Pepys recorded in 1663 that he had bought a good leg of beef there for sixpence.

Three years later the market survived the Great Fire of London, suffering only a small amount of damage. Rebuilding after the fire included providing a covered structure. In 1881 a new building was designed by Sir Horace Jones and still remains on the site today.

Acknowledgement: source material from Wikipedia

Group Convenor: John Clements

Ride Leader: John Clements

Report: John Clements, 20th November 2022