

## U3A Bike Rides

### Thames ride to Fulham Palace

### Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March 2023

After a couple of recent rides in cold and wet conditions we were hoping for an improvement. Not so!

Today's group were well wrapped up as we met at Brockwell Park Lido, pausing just long enough for the briefing and a group photo.



Pleased to be on the move, we headed to Clapham Common and Wandsworth Common.

Then it was on to the dark and foreboding austere building that is His Majesty's Prison Wandsworth Prison, and coasted down Allfarthing Lane to Garratt Lane, past Wandsworth Shopping Centre, then turning on to the Thames Path, on route to Putney Bridge.

We stopped at the Putney Pantry in **St Mary's Church**, Putney, and the hot drinks were very welcome, as was the chance to chat.



The difficult crossing at Putney Bridge was safely negotiated and then we were passing all the boat houses on Putney Embankment. Here the paved surface finished and we were on the rough surface of the Putney Towpath. Some high tides had brought pieces of flotsam ashore, to be avoided.



The rain continued as we passed below **Hammersmith Bridge**.

A short detour was required to get past the workmen doing tree trimming.

Was it like this in Cambodia, Denise?

The last stretch of path - up to the University Boat Race finishing line at Chiswick Bridge – was very muddy with some puddles and needed our full attention.



We crossed the river to the north shore on Chiswick Bridge and were then on a much better path. The Thames Path here is on a good surface and there is a recently-constructed bridge under Barnes Rail Bridge that is a great improvement.

We were able to follow the Thames all the way until leaving the river at Craven Cottage, Fulham FC's Ground and soon arrived at Bishops Park for lunch, with another welcoming café to warm up again. The corn chowder soup was just what we needed!



Nearby was historic **Fulham Palace** which was the home to the bishops of London over the centuries (until 1973) and on a future visit, with better weather, is worth exploring.

Leaving Bishops Park, we followed national cycle route 4 to Chelsea Harbour and Lots Road. The plastic covering is being removed from the Power station (which once supplied the electrical power for the Underground system) to reveal the beautifully cleaned brickwork of this immense structure.

The cycle route continues along the Embankment. We crossed Albert Bridge and through Battersea Park before cycling back towards Brockwell Lido. Well done everyone!

### **Riders**

Andrew & Mary, Ann, Chris, Denise & John, David, Jan, Jane, Jane & Joe, John, Julia, Pat

**Ride leaders:** Andrew and Mary Burke

Report by John Clements, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023

### **Notes:**

#### **St Mary's Church, Putney**

St. Mary's Church (the Church of St. Mary the Virgin), Putney has been a centre of Christian worship on this site from at least the 13th century. In 1647, during the English Civil War, the church was the site of the Putney Debates on the English constitution. It has been Grade II\* listed since 1955.

#### **Hammersmith Bridge**

Hammersmith Bridge is a suspension bridge over the River Thames, linking Hammersmith and Barnes. The current bridge (Grade II\* listed) was designed by civil engineer Sir Joseph Bazalgette and is the second permanent bridge on the site.

Hammersmith Bridge was fully closed in 2020 on public safety grounds, following the identification of micro-fractures in the 136-year-old structure. It was reopened in 2021, to pedestrians, cyclists and river traffic while stabilisation works were undertaken. It will take about £150 million to repair the bridge and there is currently a dispute between Hammersmith & Fulham Council, Transport for London and the Department for Transport about financing the work.

#### **Fulham Palace**

As the home of 120 Bishops of London over 1,300 years, Fulham Palace embodies their power, wealth and passions. The look of the Palace has changed dramatically over time as each Bishop made alterations to suit their own taste, commissioning leading architects and landscape designers to remodel the house and create spectacular gardens.

Fulham Palace was the residence of the Bishop of London until 1973. It was once one of the most powerful positions in the country and the different Bishops have played a major role in shaping British history, being involved in many important national and international events — from signing the Magna Carta to performing coronations and overseeing the church's activities in the British colonies.

### **References:**

<https://www.hammersmithbridge.org.uk/>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hammersmith\\_Bridge](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hammersmith_Bridge)

<https://www.fulhampalace.org/>