

Woolwich Ferry and Cody Dock Friday 9th June 2023

For the Group, this was a new ride which had been well researched by some of the Bike Team over the previous weeks

Our meeting point for coffee was the Old Brewery in the beautiful grounds of the Old Naval College at Greenwich.

Some chose to catch the train from Denmark Hill to Lewisham and ride from there. Others used the route from Dulwich Park, Peckham Rye, Millwall, the Surrey Canal Road and Ferranti Park.

One rider joined us from Forrest Hill. Anyway, by the appointed hour we were all assembled and ready for coffee.....and cake!

We welcomed Mark, a new member of the Group on his first ride with us; he is an experienced cyclist.



The Old Brewery is a great place to meet, with lots of space and good service. It's an interesting place to look around but time did not allow on this occasion as we were keen to be on our way.

The Thames Path heads down-river, through the grounds of the Old Naval College, past old pubs such as The Cutty Sark and the Trafalgar Tavern.

The path is a shared path but was not that busy this morning.

Some parts are wide, others quite narrow, as we travel around the Greenwich Peninsula with the O2 at its most northerly point.



There are splendid views across the river back towards Canary Wharf, bright in the sunshine.

Turning the corner we pass the North Greenwich Pier and were then cycling on the glorious broad well-surfaced Olympic Way.

To our right appears a tall menacing figure, with no head; this piece of sculpture is Damien Hirst's *Demon with Bowl*. It is a recent addition it seems, not seen on previous outings.

Once past the Peninsula Ecology Park, we detoured round the Greenwich Yacht club before reaching an industrial part. This is where the route runs past several industrial sites where aggregate is processed.



The Thames Barrier comes into view. Curiously, one of the barriers is closed. Perhaps for maintenance work?

Along the Thames Promenade the Woolwich Ferry terminals come into sight.

I was very pleased to see that cars were being loaded onto the ferry, the *Dame Vera Lynn*, at the North Terminal, as this confirmed that the ferry was operating!



Woolwich Dockyard Drydocks are hereabouts and the path continues past Mizzen Mast House.

The path has been much improved here, now providing a clear route along beside the river right up to the ferry approach road, a much better arrangement.

(Previously the route was inland, away from the river and along the pavement on Woolwich Church Street.)

I take no credit (well perhaps a little!) for the timing because the ferry arrived just a few minutes after we did.



Once the barrier was up, we wheeled our cycles onto the ship.

The journey takes only ten minutes or so and here we are approaching the North terminal.

Soon we are off along the north shore along a path that is a part of the Capital Ring.



Keeping to the pavement beside the Albert Road, we paused on the bascule bridge. To our left was view of the Royal Docks. To our right, were the lock gates and the River Thames.

The road continues over the Sir Steve Redgrave Bridge, with a small marina to the right and the impressive expanse of the Royal Albert Dock to the left. Alongside the dock is the runway of City Airport.



The route turns west for a wonderful ride on a broad path along the north side of the Royal Albert Dock, until we reach two red brick building where we turned to cross the DLR rail line at Becton Park.

Just across Strait Road is the entrance to the park and we followed the Capital Ring as it meandered through the park, across Tollgate Road and on to its northern exit. This

delightful park, not yet fully explored, was a joy, with good paths passing open fields and through wooded areas.

We hear before we see the traffic along Newham Way. The Becton Footbridge provides a safe route over this busy road.

On quiet residential roads we are very soon at the **Greenway**, and climb a gentle gradient to the elevated path.

Stretching away in the distance in both directions, this wide surfaced path starts at the Beckton Sewage Treatment Works to the east and runs 7 kilometres to Victoria Park.

We head west. With a following breeze, this is riding at its easiest! Bliss!!

As we pass the distinctive Victorian Abbey Mills Treatment Works this signals that we are nearing our departure point from the Greenway to join the path along the Three Mills River. The path here is narrow, requiring full attention. We continue through Three Mills Park and arrive at the historic Mill House with its tidal mill, visited by the group on a number of occasions.

We are now cycling along a narrow spit of land between the River Lea and Bow Creek.

Just before Bow Locks, a bridge takes us to the eastern side of Bow Creek and then on through the “Cody Wilds” (no First Nation Indians were seen!) to Cody Docks. Here is the group approaching the Dock.

Beside Bow Creek are some shaded picnic tables, a very good location for lunch. We had burned through a lot of calories this morning and it was time to restore the balance!

A nearby old red telephone box – this one had been cut in half! – served as a good location for a group photo, and here we are.

As some of the Group know I have a “thing” about bridges and at Cody Dock there is one of particular interest. It may even be a unique designs.

Described as a Rolling Bridge and installed in 2022, it moves along a wavy track and ends up inverted, leaving a clear passage for boats to pass below it. It’s so finely balanced that it can be moved by a hand crank!

To see a YouTube film of it moving, see the Notes below.



After a relaxing lunch, it was time to leave and we retraced our steps back to the Bow Locks. No herons were seen but there was a cormorant, wings spread, by the lock.



From here it was a straight run down the Limehouse Cut, the oldest London canal. The path was dry gravel and demanded our attention.

From Limehouse Basin we picked up the CS3 Superhighway back to Tower Hill and on to either London Bridge (for Peckham) or Southwark Bridge (for Burgess Park).

Congratulations to all who completed this ride! It was longer than most but we visited some new locations of interest, and did so without using any major roads. This is a ride to be repeated at some point.

Riders: *Andrew, Chris, John & Denise, John, Julia, Mark, Martin, Niesje, Pat*

Ride Leader: *John Clements*

Report: *John Clements. 11th June 2023*

Notes

The **Greenway** is a 7-kilometre long footpath and cycleway built at an elevated level on the embankment that contains the Northern Outfall Sewer, built by one of the city's most famous engineers, Joseph Bazalgette. It runs from the Abbey Mills pumping station to the west to a treatment plant in Beckton. Formerly it was an ugly sewer pipe and called "Sewerbank"! In the 1990s the pipe was covered with a shallow layer of soil and a path constructed on top of it, forming the Greenway as we see today. It now extends to Victoria Park and is a Nature Conservation area.

Cody Dock

Originally built in 1871, Cody Dock was constructed by the Imperial Chemical Company for unloading coal brought in by barges. The coal was used to produce coal gas (town gas) and to manufacture the many by-products, such as soap and the pigment Prussian Blue. The dock is now home to an artistic community who are in the process of transforming it into a creative hub.

Cody Dock Rolling Bridge

As part of the renovation, it was decided to reopen the dock to a nearby river's tidal waters, which in turn required the removal of an old dam on the site and the construction of a new footbridge. Simon Myers, of the Gasworks Dock Partnership and in charge of redeveloping the dock, had planned to install a traditional bascule bridge for the site. However, when architect Thomas Randall-Page heard of these plans, he approached Myers and, with the support of engineer Tim Lucas, pitched a counter proposal for a far more ambitious type of bridge, a rolling bridge. He was inspired by the story that it is possible to ride a square-wheel cycle along an undulating track!

The bridge was, opened in 2022, appropriately named the Cody Dock Rolling Bridge, and this project formed a part of a larger redevelopment of this former industrial dock area. The bridge is partly inspired by Victorian-era infrastructure like canal locks and is constructed from weathered steel and oak, weighing in at 13 tonnes.

In its usual position, cyclists and pedestrians make their way across the bridge. When a boat needs to pass under it, steel teeth installed on the rectangular ends of the bridge allow it to roll on a pair of tracks that are installed into the concrete abutments on either bank. The bridge deck rises and eventually is at the top of the structure, creating headroom for the boats in the lock. The process takes about 20 minutes.

The bridge includes scrap metal and concrete ballast, countering the weight of the deck and enabling it to roll smoothly through an entire 180 degrees until it comes to a stop at a fully inverted position. Impressively, the whole thing is so carefully engineered that it requires no motors or electricity to move. Instead, it's totally powered by hand winches.

Here are a couple of videos that tell the story and show the bridge in action:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAJy5ai6E2U>

https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C5CHFA_enGB950GB953&sxsrf=APwXEddr1YYhOb950Hlh-K2Zw5IDY2GROA:1686296625373&q=Cody+Dock+bridge&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjxid262LX_AhUTR8AKHd-6AwoQ1QJ6BAgFEAE&biw=1338&bih=708&dpr=2#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:454cf03c,vid:e6u-DBwEZew