

U3a Bike Rides Hyde Park and Regents Park Tuesday 18th July 2023

In June last year, Mary and Andrew led a ride to Regents Park, and here we are again, seven in number, off to repeat the ride.

Brixton Water Lane took us to the crossing of Brixton Road and into Lambert Road. We had to pause here for a few minutes. A long line of very young cyclists, with marshals, was making its way in our direction. We did wonder where they were heading – on safe routes, one hoped!

The eighth rider was waiting for us at Eagle Pond, as arranged, and a passing cyclist kindly delayed her journey to take our picture.

From there we took the familiar route on Cycle Route 25 over Clapham Common to Battersea Park, and across Chelsea Bridge.

Then on past the elegant mansions of Belgravia, partly on local roads and partly on a cycle route, to the Albert Gate entrance to Hyde Park.

A right turn along South Carriage Drive and a few more turns of the pedal took us to the Serpentine Kitchen.

Parking up, we were pleasantly surprised at the speedy service.

Two adjacent tables were available and we were soon catching up on the latest news.

Retrieving our bikes, we circled the park to the Victoria Gate

From this exit there was a short distance down the Bayswater Road to ride, before crossing the road.

We picked up the route along Stanhope Terrace, and through the streets of the Hyde Park Estate and Tyburnia, with only light traffic.

These brought us on to Marylebone Road, just opposite the York Gate entrance to Regent's Park.



Once into the park and across the Outer Circle we crossed the York Bridge leading to the Inner Circle and grand gates at the entrance to the gardens.



Some of the roses were still in bloom but we were a few weeks too late to see them at their best.

Adjacent to the Inner Circle there is secure locking for the bikes, convenient for the Regent's Bar and Kitchen, where packed lunches were consumed.

After admiring the later flowering roses in Regent's Park we assembled for the return ride. One of the riders found she had a puncture in the rear tyre, a piece of glass was the culprit.

But in no time at all, the tube was mended with a patch and the ride continued through Regent's Park and along the Regent's Canal.

The canal path passes **the blow-up bridge**, which was destroyed in an explosion, and then past boats, paddle boarders and a few ducklings, as well as the hyaenas in London Zoo.



We had a short walk past the houseboats because a footbridge is permanently closed as a result of structural problems.

Then the route took us back to Hyde Park, down Constitution Hill, past Buckingham Palace to the Mall and over Westminster Bridge.

We finished a pleasant day's outing through Archbishop's Park and Kennington. Everyone enjoyed this ride and it will become a favourite, I'm sure. Ideally, we should visit in late June, to enjoy the rose garden at its best. Thank you Mary for leading the ride!

Distance: 18 miles.

Riders: Andrew & Mary, Caroline, Christine, Jane , Jane, John, Pat

Ride leader: Mary Burke

Report by John Clements, 18th July 2023

Notes

The blow-up bridge: This is Macclesfield Bridge, on the Regent's Canal. It was here that a horrific incident once occurred. In the early hours of 2 October 1874, The Tilbury — a barge containing a mixed cargo of coffee and nuts — exploded right under the bridge. Both boat and structure were immediately destroyed. The Spectator would later report that there was also "the perilous combination of two or three barrels of petroleum and about five tons of gunpowder."

The three men aboard the Tilbury — one of whom, it's presumed, lit a match that ignited the blast — were killed. Windows shattered a mile from the explosion. Residents sat bolt upright in bed, fearing an earthquake. The animals in the nearby zoo caused a hullabaloo. 'Dead fish rained from the sky in the West End'.

A plaque by the bridge now marks the tragedy, and explains what happened after:

Though Macclesfield Bridge was reduced to rubble, its cast iron columns were relatively undamaged, and were reused when the bridge was put back together. The name of the forge, Coalbrookdale, which also built the world's first iron bridge, can still be clearly seen at the top the pillars:

There was one minor adjustment; the pillars were turned round the other way, which is why you can now see rope grooves from boats on both sides.

A year later Parliament passed The Explosives Act to regulate "the manufacturing, keeping, selling, carrying, and importing of Nitro-glycerine, Gunpowder and other Explosive Substances".

