

**u3a Bike Rides
Brighton seafront
Tuesday 25th July 2023**

Beneath the glass canopy of Brighton Station we listened to the drumming sound of torrential rain, and wondered if we had made the right decision to venture out on this ride.

Within ten minutes it had eased to a drizzle and so we set out for the short ride to the coffee stop, the recently-discovered Garden Café. This delightful venue has many nooks and crannies, with hanging baskets and potted plants in profusion. The rain had ceased when we emerged to set off through back streets down to the Old Steyne, by way of the Royal Pavilion.

The seafront along Marine Parade was a joy to cycle, a dedicated route all the way to Black Rock and the Marina. It was sad to see the poor condition of the wonderful Victorian cast-iron arches along the parade. At Brighton Marina we joined the Undercliff Walk, cycling permitted, for a joyous, wind-assisted two-mile ride to Rottingdean.



Rottingdean is a pretty little village where Rudyard Kipling lived. To visit the **Kipling Gardens** we did have to negotiate the short stretch of road through the village. The garden is a place of tranquillity and peace. It also provided a view of the windmill sitting on top of a hill nearby.

On a previous recce ride, John had reminded us of Kipling's poem "If" and I was prompted to look it out and enjoy reading it once again!



We returned to the seafront and found a useful spot, sitting on imported Norwegian blocks of stone (sea erosion is a problem here) for our picnic lunches.

Lunch done, we turned westwards and into moderate sou'westerly breeze, back to Black Rock, on past Brighton Palace Pier, and the Statue of Liberty marking the Brighton-Hove boundary. The road along Shoreham Harbour arm does carry some HGVs but for most of the way there is a footpath, not much used by walkers.

Finally, within sight of the harbour mouth there was Carats Café, with a welcome cup of tea.

The run downwind back to Grand Avenue and the statue of Queen Victoria was soon achieved before turning inland for a short ride to Hove Station and the return train ride.



Time: about 4 hours excluding train rides.

Distance: about 18 miles.

Riders: Jan, John, Pat

Ride leader: John Clements

Report by John; photos by John, 31st July 2023

Acknowledgement: source material from Brighton and Hove City website.

Notes

Like all the best traditional gardens, **Kipling Gardens** are divided into a series of distinctive areas. These include a woodland garden, which is particularly beautiful in spring, and a rose garden full of beautiful colours and scents.

The garden contains thousands of bulbs that produce a carpet of colour in spring. There's also a small herb garden and a chalk garden with picnic tables, just perfect for those who want to relax longer and have a bite to eat in these beautiful surroundings.

The gardens were originally the grounds of 'The Elms', the country house which Rudyard Kipling rented between 1897 and 1902. Kipling wrote many of his 'Just So' stories in the house. This house is now in private ownership.

The gardens had become overgrown over many decades, but were rescued and restored by the Rottingdean Preservation Society in the early 1980s. In 1986 the site was formally handed over to the council and they have been maintained and improved upon to this day.