

U3A Bike Rides
Waterlink Way to Deptford Creek and Greenwich
Tuesday 26th March 2024

A bright, cool morning greeted us as we met up at the Clock Café in Dulwich Park, ready for our ride to the Waterlink Way.

The route researched by Jane offered an alternative to the train ride through the tunnel to Penge East.

We headed out of the park via the Fireman's Alley, through the Lordship Lane Housing Estate and across Lordship Lane into Wood Vale.

We passed Camberwell Old Cemetery, crossed Forest Hill Road and into Brenchley Gardens, then turned into Honor Oak Cemetery.

A barrier across the path, put up since the recce ride, forced a detour before we could reach the Buckthorne Bridge.

Once across Brockley Road we were on pleasant suburban roads that led to the North-East corner of Ladywell Fields, then coasted down the path to reach the Broxbourne River.

Soon we arrived at the bridge over the main line which prompted a discussion on the proper characterisation of the structure. Not a spiral bridge, it is a helical bridge, as our former Convenor, Peter, had pointed out to us on our very first ride on this route a number of years ago. There was a good flow of water down the river after all the recent rain.



Arriving at Ladywell, we headed for *Le Delice*, our coffee stop, with a tempting array of pastries on display. The first group were just leaving the café as we in the second group arrived.

Our route was across Ladywell Road and then on minor urban roads that led to the Ravensbourne River again, and on past Lewisham DLR into Ravensbourne Gardens.

Here a heron was spotted patrolling the river.



Busy Loampit Vale was crossed on lights and led us along the river to Everson Road DLR station, then into the (quite small) Brookmill Nature Reserve.

Then it was across Broadway Fields to Deptford Bridge and Deptford Bridge Road, another busy road but easily negotiated on cycle lights. At Creekside, roadworks were by-passed on foot along the pavement.



Then it was on to the A220, Deptford Creek Road, crossed on cycle lights and so to Greenwich and the Cutty Sark, with a pause for a photo opportunity. How fortunate we are that this graceful ship was restored after the devastating fire in 2007. It now rests on a supporting frame entirely around the waterline. See <https://www.rmg.co.uk/cutty-sark/history>.

Our lunch stop was the Old Brewery, built on the site of the original Old Brewery which dated back to 1717 and once served the salty old seadogs of the neighbouring seamen's hospital.



There was plenty of outdoor seating and a leisurely lunch was enjoyed, sandwiches ordered and quickly delivered (they were huge!).

Those who visited the building would have seen the remnants of the former brewery, with the brass brewing tanks and piping still in place.



One of the aims of choosing to ride this route was to familiarise ourselves with the newly-opened Cycleway 4. This is a completely segregated cycle route with traffic light control and is a useful addition to the network of cycleways. It links Greenwich to London Bridge.

We left the route at Canada Water, turning off at Greenland Dock. Along the way it is possible to identify the features that still marked the former route of the Grand Surrey Canal, such as the two bridges along the road. The canal entrance into Greenland Dock was at the Surrey Docks Fitness and Water Sports Centre.

The canal continued on the other side of the dock, and eventually joined the River Thames at Salt Quay.

Passing below the splendid huge red structure that is the Scherzer Rolling Bascule Bridge (one of four along this part of the Thames) we arrived at Canada Water Shopping Centre. From there a short ride took us into Southwark Park.

On earlier rides the routes we had used from Southwark Park required us to travel on busy roads under railway bridges where there was no separation from heavy traffic. After some further route-finding, a new route has been discovered that avoided these roads,

Leaving the park at Dilston Grove, then through the Abbeyfield Estate, we crossed the Rotherhithe New Road and made our way along quiet Corbett's Lane.



A new archway, attractively lit in blue lights, has recently been opened beneath the railway lines into London Bridge and using this we were able to join Cycleway 10 * near the Millwall football ground. We left Cycleway 10 to cross the Old Kent Road into Burgess Park where riders left to head home -- before the promised rain arrived.

[* Cycleway 10 was originally called Quietway 1 but TfL re-designated it in 2021. TfL is now using "Cycleway" for all the improved cycle routes.]

Riders Alex Murdock. Andrew Burke. Caroline Strallen. Chris Booth. Daniela Walther. Jan Rae. Jane Andrew. Jane Antos. Joe Antos. John Clements. Julia Carter. Julie Stent. Mary Burke. Valerie Greenfield.

Distance: About 17 miles. **Time:** 4½ hours

Ride leaders: Jane and Joe Antos

Report and photos: John Clements, 28th March 2024

Notes. The Ravensbourne River

The Ravensbourne is 11 miles long with a total catchment area of 180 km². It rises at Caesar's Well, Keston, and flows through the London Boroughs of Bromley, Lewisham and Greenwich. Further downstream it passes through Ladywell Fields, where considerable restoration work was carried out in 2007-2008, with the removal of a long stretch of 1980's concrete channelling, re-routing to more closely match its natural course, and the introduction of terraces and submerged aquatic vegetation to provide animal habitat and improve flood control.