

## u3a Bike Rides Brighton seafront Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024

The group of riders assembled at Brighton Station arriving by a variety of routes - by way of East Croydon and a Southern or City Thameslink train, or from Eastbourne, or after an overnight stay in the town. We welcomed new member Gerry to the ride.

A sharp turn out of the station down towards the North Lanes avoids busy Queens Street and after a short ride took us to the coffee stop, the Garden Café. This delightful venue has many nooks and crannies, with hanging baskets and potted plants in profusion.



Coffee and croissant consumed, 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 cycle 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 where cycling was permitted, for a joyous, wind-assisted two-mile ride to Rottingdean, beneath the chalk cliffs.



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, not too busy on this occasion.

There is no provision for cyclists to lock bikes and so we had to lock them all together, propped against a near-by tree.



The garden is a place of tranquillity and peace.



We made our way up through the garden, separated into smaller areas by flint-stone walls



At the top of the garden the viewpoint provided a view of the windmill sitting on top of a hill near to the coast road. Here also was a gazebo which provided some shelter from the arriving rain. I provided a reading of that wonderful poem by Kipling... "If", but just the first verse!

By now the rain was more than a drizzle and the idea of sandwiches on the beach was voted down, so we adjourned to the nearest public house, the "White Horses". Seven rather wet cyclists proceeded to drip their way to tables to await service. Our stay was extended by the long wait for the staff to bring Jane's dish, but it did mean that by the time we left the sun had appeared .



From Rottingdean we turned westwards and into a brisk sou'westerly breeze, back to Black Rock, on past Brighton Palace Pier, and the Statue of Liberty marking the Brighton-Hove boundary.

The road to Hove Station is marked by the imposing figure of Queen Victoria and here several of the group left.



The rest of the group (just two) continued on along the Shoreham Harbour arm bounded on one side by beaches and the other by the industrial sites on the harbour.

There is a footpath, not much used by walkers, which served well separating us from the HGVs, although few in number today.

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:** Brian Heatley Daniela Walther. Felicity Henderson. Gerry Gavigan,. Jane Andrew. John Clements, Julia Carter

*Ride leader: John Clements*

*Report and photos by John; 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024*

**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.