

u3a Bike Rides
Wimbledon, Morden Hall and the Wandle
Friday 11 April 2025

As expected, this ride was a popular one and we were not able to accommodate everyone. (The reserves were offered priority on the next ride, however.)

We could not have asked for better conditions, with blue skies and the sun warming the atmosphere after the overnight low temperatures.

The route from Brockwell Park was the familiar one of Brixton Water Lane, to Clapham Common, meeting Caroline by arrangement at Eagle Pond, then on to Wandsworth Common and down the hill to Earlsfield, then into Wimbledon Park.

The park was busy, lots of children, some having tennis lessons, as we sat outside the Café in bright sunshine.

This part of the park is designated as “no cycling”, understandable given the number of parents and children.

Within the park is what is reputed to be the smallest police station in London. Closed now of course.

We left the park at the south-east corner, on to Home Park Road, and from there we were on suburban roads, and the tree-lined avenues of SW 19 on a mostly hill-free route led by Mary who had diligently researched this ride.

This brought to Morden Hall Park, which we entered after crossing on lights the busy A24.

The park has been a popular destination for the group over the years, and having made good progress there was a ample time to do a circuit of the park, and along part of the River Wandle, arriving at the Stable Yard.



Some of the group settled at the picnic tables beside the Stable Yard, others headed for the NT Garden Centre and the Potting Shed Café for lunch.



We were particularly interested in seeing the River Wandle and the water quality, follow the report of an oil discharge in the upper part of the river a couple of months ago.

The water looked ok, with no sign of oil on the surface. There had been an extensive clean-up operations and it looked as though it had been successful.



After lunch we headed towards home, past Dene City Park, busy today.

Just beyond Windsor Avenue, a heron was spotted. This beautiful bird was at the water's edge, watching the flowing river with an eye out for its lunch.



The river was used at one time to power a mill powered by the watermill. The wheel has been restored, although it no longer drives the mill. In Victorian times it was used to grind tobacco, to make snuff.

From here we followed along the route of the Wandle, passing some information boards about the river.

(For information, the four boards gave details about:

- * Birds (cormorant, Kingfisher, grey wagtail, grey heron);
- * Fish (eels, stickleback, brown trout);
- * Pollution and work to clean it up;
- * Historical landmarks along the river; Wandsworth Gas Company, Surrey Iron Railway, Williamson's Dye Works, the Upper Mill, and All Saints Church).

Just before crossing the A24, there was Merton Abbey Mills, a former textile factory near the site of Merton Abbey, and now the home of a number of small retailers.

Here too is an undershot watermill; this one has also been restored, and today it was turning quite quickly, driven by a good flow of water down the river.

We left the Wandle at busy Earlsfield and proceed to climb, each at their own pace, up Magdalen Road, past austere HMP Wandsworth, and across Wandsworth and Clapham Commons and so back to Brockwell Park, the end of the ride.

A big “thank you” to Mary for researching the route and leading the ride, almost entirely avoiding busy roads and steep hill.

Ride Leader: Mary Burke

Time: about 4½ hours.

Distance cycled: 18 miles.

Riders: *Andrew Burke.. Brian Heatley Caroline Strallen. Daniela Walther. David Rosenfeld. Gerry Gavigan, Irene Rosenfeld. Jeremy Burke John Clements. Julia Carter. Martin Goffe. Mary Burke Patrick Mulhern Tacey Kobayashi*

Acknowledgement: source material from Wikipedia

Report by John Clements, 13 April 2025