

## U3A Bikers

### Four churches and a graveyard

### Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Warmly dressed against the cold weather, we met at Brockwell Park Lido for a tour of some of the “Waterloo churches” in London.

These were built in the 1820’s to commemorate the defeat of Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo in June 1815. There are four in the Borough of Lambeth and we would be visiting three of these.

After a short briefing to keep us all safe, and a description of the ride by Niesje, we were off along back roads to the first church, St Matthew’s, at Brixton.



Perhaps of a rather austere in appearance, the church is in the “neoclassic Doric” style. The doors were firmly closed and locked but Mary spied a man cleaning who very kindly agreed to open the church and let us see inside. So, very fortunate.

There was just a small area for the congregation; most of space was used for offices, apparently. But a most striking feature was the three stained glass panels of contemporary design. It was created by a local Jamaican artist, Anthony Moo-Young and the story of how he came to create these can be read here (thank you Gisela for finding this):

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2018/sep/09/the-buddha-of-brixton-whose-spiritual-quest-started-when-his-sister-was-shot-mooji-tony-young>



We next headed via Kennington Park to the second church, St Mark's, here too finding it closed and locked.

Again we were fortunate to chance upon the vicar who allowed us in and told something of its history.

His by-line is "the nearest church to any Underground Station"; the Oval Underground is about 50 yards away.

The nave features a glazed dome lit by a large roof light above (I was reminded of the film "Titanic" which also featured such a dome) and there is fine stained-glass window.



By now, coffee was calling and fortunately the café "Due Amici" was just a very short ride away, offering a choice of seating outdoors or in the warmth indoors.

Kennington Road led to Waterloo and the church of St John's, unfortunately with scaffolding around it.

The churchyard has been turned into a garden, now well-maintained by a local community.





Threading our way through back roads towards London Bridge, we arrived at the “surprise”, the Crossbones Graveyard and Garden of Remembrance, a paupers’ graveyard and memorial shrine. Although it was closed, some view of it was visible through the mesh fence.



This is an old burial ground in an area previously known as The Mint, one of London’s poorest and most violent areas. Here are buried the “Winchester Geese”, medieval sex workers licensed by the Bishop to work in local brothels. When closed in 1853 it held the remains of about 15,000 paupers and prostitutes. (You can read more at: <https://crossbones.org.uk/>)

Time for lunch and we headed as planned to the café at Southwark Cathedral.....to find it closed! (The website claims it is open all day, 7 days a week!)



The **Red Cross Garden** was nearby and the group made a short visit there while we pondered on alternatives. Fortunately we were not far from *Ev*, a restaurant we had visited before and which serves “Classic Turkish mezze dishes and grilled meats, in a comfortable eatery under the railway arches”.

A big “thank you” to Niesje who had the idea for this ride and found us a good, safe route. This added to our knowledge of London – I for one had not heard of the Waterloo churches before. And thank you, Mary, for getting us access to two of the churches!

**Distance:** 12 ½ miles, about 4 hours

**Riders:** Andrew, David, Gisella, Irene, Jane, Jane & Joe, John, Martin, Mary, Niesje.

*Ride Leaders: Niesje, John*  
*Group Convenor: John Clements*  
*Report: John Clements, 30<sup>th</sup> March, 2022*

## NOTES

**Red Cross Garden** is named after the street in which it is located, Redcross Way (with a different spelling), and not the humanitarian organisation. The garden and the associated cottages form an early example of one of Octavia Hill's social housing schemes. Known as a co-founder of the National Trust, she was also a campaigner for the provision of social housing, community facilities and public open space. Red Cross Garden was her pioneer social housing scheme.



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red\\_Cross\\_Garden,\\_Southwark](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_Cross_Garden,_Southwark)

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Here are some more useful links:

A list of the Waterloo Churches in London (144 built, about 100 survive; total number built about 600)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_Commissioners%27\\_churches\\_in\\_London](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Commissioners%27_churches_in_London)

St Mark's Church, Kennington

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St\\_Mark%27s\\_Church,\\_Kennington](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Mark%27s_Church,_Kennington)

Octavia Hill

<http://www.octaviahill.org/>

## Acknowledgement

Information from Wikipedia