

## U3A Bikers Garden City tour Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2022

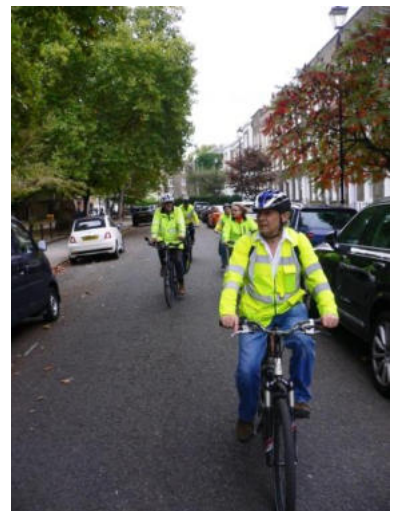
This was a new ride for us researched by Mary, although visiting a number of our favourite destinations along the route.

For this outing, we met at Brockwell Lido, eleven in total and welcomed our newest member, Tony, for his first ride with us.

After a short description of the route we would take, a safety briefing, and a group photograph taken by a visitor to the Lido, we set off on the familiar route to Loughborough Junction and Kennington Gardens.

And so on to Lambeth, taking in a visit to Cleaver Square, and arrived at the Museum of Garden History for the coffee stop, with plenty of space in the airy café.

In the graveyard outside are buried John Tradescant, both the father and son, botanists and gardeners in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, and also Captain William Bligh, of the Mutiny on the Bounty fame.



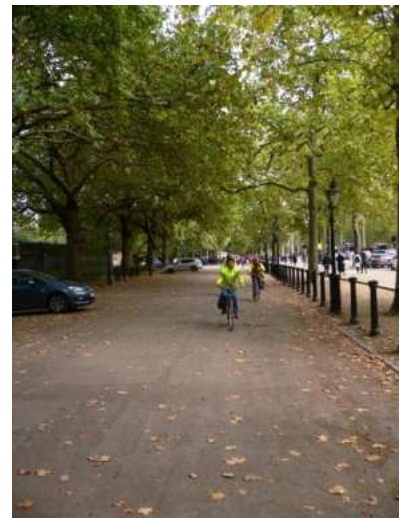
Across Lambeth Bridge, with a cycle lane, around Smith Square, and through an archway on foot into Dean's Yard. The road was busy with many students from the nearby Westminster School.



Dean's Yard was a new experience for most of us, a beautiful square surrounded on all sides by buildings associated with Westminster Abbey; Church House (headquarters of the Church of England), school buildings, and the Westminster Abbey Choir School.

On the north side was an archway to the Great Sanctuary, Abbey Offices and the Deanery. Some buildings are thought to date from the 14th century.

From this square there is a fine view of a side of Westminster Abbey, with its flying buttresses, looking bright and clean in the autumn sunshine.



Continuing on foot through the second archway, we arrived on to busy Victoria Street. A short ride took us to Horseguards Parade, then down the cycle path of the Mall, past Buckingham Palace, up Constitution to Admiralty Arch, crossing to Hyde Park Corner, to Apsley House and the splendid modern Queen's Gates, commemorating Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

A counter-clockwise ride took us up to the exit across Bayswater Road up to Stanhope Place. We proceeded on urban roads up Lissom Grove until we spied the bridge over the Regent's Canal, taking the narrow path to join the canal-side path, conveniently quiet and a joy to ride.

On the opposite side of the canal are several grand mansions, including Nash-designed Hanover Lodge (which, according to Wikipedia, is owned by a Russian billionaire), and Veneto Villa and Gothick Villa.

We passed under “**The Blow-up Bridge**”, pausing to look at the rope marks on the cast-iron columns.



At the distinctive red floating pagoda-style Chinese restaurant we turned off the canal path and entered Regents Park, heading down the Broad Walk, before leaving the park and crossing busy Marylebone Road on traffic lights.



Leaving Marylebone and on to Fitzrovia, we crossed Tottenham Court Road into Bloomsbury and so on to Gordon Square. Momo’s Garden Café is a tiny kiosk serving hot soup and sandwiches, our lunch stop.

Today at lunchtime the Square was busy with London University students, much busier than it had been on the recce ride just a week earlier!

In Brunswick Square there is the Great Plane, or Brunswick Plane, designated as one of the ten Great Trees of London and probably dating from the laying out of Brunswick Square gardens in 1796. At well over 200 years old, it is thought to be the second oldest plane tree in central London.



Red Lion Street led us to High Holborn and once across we were at Lincoln’s Inn Fields, then heading towards Soho, around historic Seven Dials to our final garden.



This was the little-known Phoenix Garden and it was a little gem; it is a local community garden established in 1984, located in St Giles behind the Phoenix Theatre.

It is described as “an ornamental wildlife garden, it provides a peaceful green retreat for local residents, workers and tourists and is a haven for urban wildlife, including the West End's only frog population!”. Within the garden we discovered a piece of street art, by Stik. As someone remarked, perhaps he had run out of gable ends in East Dulwich!

The route home was along Long Acre to the Strand, across Waterloo Bridge, along Belvedere Road to Westminster Bridge, through Archbishops Park and Lambeth to Brockwell Park.

### **Riders**

John, Mary & Andrew John & Denise, Christine, David, Irene, Gisela, Julia, Tony.

Time: About 5 hours including stops

Distance: About 18miles

For a map of the ride click on:

[thebikeshow.net/29GC](http://thebikeshow.net/29GC)

### **Notes**

#### **The Blow-up Bridge**

This is Macclesfield Bridge, on the Regent's Canal, north of Regent's Park. Its tranquillity belies a horrific incident that once occurred here. In the early hours of 2 October 1874, *The Tilbury*, a barge containing a concoction of coffee and nuts, exploded right under the bridge. Both boat and structure were immediately destroyed. Alongside its less volatile cargo, *The Spectator* would later report, was "the perilous combination of two or three barrels of petroleum and about five tons of gunpowder." The three men aboard *The Tilbury*, one of whom (it's presumed) lit a match that ignited the blast, were killed. Windows shattered a mile from the explosion. Residents sat bolt upright in bed, fearing an earthquake. The animals in the nearby zoo caused a hullabaloo. 'Dead fish rained from the sky in the West End.'

A plaque by the bridge now marks the tragedy, and explains what happened *after*:  
*“Though Macclesfield Bridge was reduced to rubble, its cast iron columns were relatively unscathed, and reused when the bridge was put back together. The name of the forge, Coalbrookdale, which also built the world's first iron bridge, can still be clearly seen atop the pillars. It's a rare case of a London structure being rebuilt like-for-like. However, there was one minor adjustment; the pillars were swivelled round the other way, which is why you can now see rope grooves from boats on either side. It's no coincidence that, just one year on The Explosive Act was passed.”*

*Acknowledgement: source material from Wikipedia*

*Group Convenor: John Clements*

*Ride Leader: Mary Burke*

*Report: John Clements, 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022*