

OXFORDSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES



From the Ride and Stride Press Officer:

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Ride and Stride 2012

September 8th 2012 was one of the warmer days of the summer; “possibly the hottest StRide day on record” was how one StRider put it, which must have been an encouragement for StRiders. At the time of writing, with some sponsorship still to be sent to the Treasurer, the total raised is £113,000, including Gift Aid, which means we are well on target for matching last year’s figure. Many people have remarked that there seemed to be less StRiders and less people signing in on the day, which seems to indicate that sponsors have been even more generous than usual.

In the past I have remarked on the large number of people who visit 30 or more churches on their StRide; this trend has continued, with about 10% of the Cyclists signing in at more than 40 churches last year. Nigel Downing of Rotherfield Peppard travelled 81 miles, visited 73 churches and raised £1,556. Helen Abbot of Goring Free Church walked 27 miles to visit 42 churches, starting in the Wallingford area before continuing to Oxford where she was asked where her bike was! Well done Helen – the next day she took part as a walker in the Chiltern Marathon! The achievement of two young cyclists has come to our notice: Kit (aged 14) and James (aged 12) Lamb, cycling for Sibford Gower Quaker Meeting House, visited 53 and 42 churches, cycling 54 and 40 miles respectively – two names to watch out for in future years! There were also pony riders this year; Millie Pinder, 8 years old, of Kingston Lisle, rode Pippy round 3 churches with her mother cycling beside her and the Blackburn family of Cirencester took part as pony riders and cyclists visiting 15 churches in aid of SS Thomes More and John Fisher, Burford.

There were a number of StRides with a difference: Daniel Blakey took with two young sons on the train from Bicester to Oxford, cycling 35 miles back to Bucknell with his sons in the trailer – combined weight over 6 stone; Helen Hedley of Bloxham rode with one son on a trailer bike and the other on his own bike; Rachel, Mark and Ann Davies of Banbury took part on scooter and walking, visiting 15 churches; and Kate Ulmer of Chilton went by scooter to two churches; Alan Poole of Cogges visited 8 churches on his mobility scooter; the Mustard Seeds Baby and Toddler Group travelled from Watlington to Pyrton and back pushing buggies and cycling. Issy Jones of Chalgrove did 30 circuits of the outside of St Mary’s in the children’s Ride and Stride event.

It is interesting to note how many sponsors participants have; Pauline Franklin of Yarnton once again persuaded 105 customers to sponsor her to the tune of £1,315; she also cycled to 43 churches. John Turner of Longcot had 103 people sponsoring him to the tune of £817, one of whom was a workman who just happened to be working in the village at the time. Sue Allen of Banbury St Joseph, who has been taking part for 27 years, had 90 sponsors and raised £604, while Madeleine Gilpin’s 85 sponsors brought her £799. Three welcomers, Larry Cribben of St Edmunds Abingdon, Helen Brook + 5 of St Barnabas Oxford and I had 36, 31 and 43 sponsors respectively.



Important names which featured in the StRide were Bishop John, who walked round churches in Cowley with Charles Baker, chairman of OHCT; Rowan Williams who sponsored Janet Dagnall of Charlbury; and John Wesley who welcomed StRiders, including the Minister, Adam Stevenson, to Watlington Methodist Church on their Bicentenary.

We have encouraged people to StRide at other venues and on other days if they are unable to participate on the actual day, and this year we have heard about a number: The Revd. Dr Hugh White,

Vicar of Deddington, was on study leave in Sweden where he visited 27 churches or chapels in Växjö, Oxford's link diocese, cycling 70 miles in 11 hours. Amongst the walkers, Ian Fraser of Rotherfield Peppard walked around 35 churches in Winchester, raising £1,023.75 in sponsorship.



Philip Loder of Stanton Harcourt was at a medical conference in Milan so he spent a couple evenings visiting 16 churches; as he could not get his sponsorship form signed he took photographs of the churches he visited (Milan Cathedral pictured).

George Russell walked round Cambridge visiting 11 churches and a number of StRiders strayed across county boundaries, walking or cycling in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Warwickshire. Hilary Davey of Milton under Wychwood cycled from Christchurch Cathedral, Oxford, to Gloucester Cathedral visiting one church on route. As a welcomer, I signed in a father and son team who had cycled 74 miles from Hampshire to Standlake "to visit a friend"!

It was good to receive reports of more groups taking part; Marcham once again started the day with their Men's breakfast being open to all those taking part; two groups, of six and ten set off after a talk about the Ride and Stride together with a Quiz on Churches. The Senior Section of the Wychwood guides cycled round the villages of Churchill, Kingham and Bledington from the Wychwoods, a distance of about 17 miles and were welcomed back to Milton under Wychwood with tea and cakes provided by members of the Church. 4 Scouts and one leader from 30th Abingdon (Baptist) Scouts cycled round 22 churches and raised £435. Group Scout Leader, Jill Elliot encouraged some of her Troop to take part; a scout was allocated to each of the 4 churches in the Benefice and they raised £1,066 for Sandford St Martin, Duns Tew, Steeple Aston and Westcote Barton visiting 18 churches. Clive Frewins wrote about the West Hanney group of seven cyclists, the oldest of whom was Brian White who is over 80; he got round 27 churches. There were two other over 80s in the group who visited 17 churches. He made a remark, with which I wholeheartedly agree: "this has nothing to do with people's religious beliefs – or lack of them. It's a great day out getting some excellent exercise and enjoying (if you confine yourself to the Vale of the White Horse) some wonderful buildings that are all open specially for the ride. You are also quite likely to bump into some interesting people and, of course, you are raising money for a worthy cause".



We received a lovely e-mail from Anna Froker who said "my husband and I have only lived in the UK since April, when we moved from California. I had no idea of the number of ancient Parish Churches dotted throughout the countryside and was thrilled to have the opportunity to discover, as well as raise funds to preserve, these beautiful historic structures. No matter one's religion or beliefs, the old stone churches are undeniably sacred places".

In order to attract people to visit Churches, many of which this year were bemoaning the fact that they had few visitors, it is always a good idea organise an event, such as an Open Day, Flower Festival, etc. Alternative fund raising activities are also beneficial in highlighting the work of the Trust – Gillian Argyle of St Andrew's, Linton Road, hosted an event to see two particular ecclesiastic works of art and invited visitors to make a donation. Harry Hogg who organises Radio St/Ride in Christchurch Cathedral grounds very generously paid £1 for each person who visited the Station and £1 for every StRider whom he signed in on behalf of the Cathedral which was closed to visitors due to an event.

Another year when the event was much enjoyed by many and we have been delighted by the inspirational stories of achievements which make it such a memorable day which people want to be part of every year. The Kay family from Garsington have taken part in the Cycle Ride, initially in Wiltshire, since before their daughter was born; she is now 26 and their two daughters come home every year, along with extended family members, to take part – that is dedication and commitment for you!

The Ride and Stride this year is on Saturday 14th September.