

OXFORDSHIRE HISTORIC CHURCHES TRUST

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Ride and Stride 2011

The weather was once more kind to most of us on 10th September – not too hot or too windy. Once more St/Riders and their sponsors came up trumps and raised over £116,000, which is a magnificent total given the state of the economy.

522 Churches were open on the day. We are always encouraged by bright ideas, and Marcham decided to change the date of their Men's Breakfast so that it could be held before the cyclists set off; they included families and invited Charles Baker, Chairman of the Trust, to talk about the work of OHCT. Charles then went into Oxford where he joined Bishop John who had offered to visit churches in the City; they started at St Andrew's Linton Road and finished at Christ Church where they were met by the Dean and by John Morrison, among others.



The number of people who visit 30 churches or more seems to increase every year, and as always there are those who travel enormous distances. Robin Feith of Pyrton cycled 90 miles visiting 71 churches, and Tim Middleton of Goring visited 82 churches, starting near Banbury and cycling home via Oxford, Abingdon and Wallingford. At the other end of the scale, three toddlers walked, scooted and cycled round a circuit in Chalgrove churchyard and Joseph Clarke (2 ½) walked round Woodstock, visiting 5 churches. 7 year old Joe Appleyard is keeping up the good work and this year visited 45 churches.

The sums raised in individual sponsorship were also impressive: 8 St/Riders had totals over £1,000, including Gift Aid, while two, Robin Feith and Mark Abrey, who was marking his 10th Anniversary as Rector of the Chase Benefice, were sponsored for over £2,000 and Reggie Heyworth of Holwell amassed over £4,000. 14 churches raised over £1,000, 2 over £2,000 and Holwell St Mary raised over £5,000.

It was good to hear of groups of younger cyclists taking part this year: David Thomas, a Scout from Abingdon, persuaded three fellow Scouts to take part and the Revd. B Phillips of Bodicote took 10 young people on a mini pilgrimage of 18 churches south of Banbury, saying prayers at individual churches.

Many St/Riders like to take a different route each year or do something different: Father O'Sullivan of St John the Evangelist Wallingford went out on Friday 9th because his commitments on Saturday prevented him from cycling on the day. Ian Fraser of Rotherfield Peppard visited 45 churches (including a synagogue) in Gloucestershire. St Kenelm's, Enstone, had a visitor from Singapore! Mr and Mrs Channon of Charlton-on-Otmoor visited churches in Weston Super Mare and Brian Carlick, also from Charlton, visited churches in Northamptonshire, including one based in a primary school.

I always like to hear or read about people's experiences, and John Clements of St Lawrence, North Hinksey, wrote a very good article in his parish magazine about his day. He ended his article with "It was a lovely day, visiting places one would not normally visit, hearing their stories, meeting welcoming people and other riders and striders. On days like this, churches are at their best, I think, united in a common endeavour, welcoming everyone and showing that they are alive and have so much to offer".

The Ride and Stride this year is on Saturday 8th September.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Ian Fraser', written in black ink.