

Martin and I travelled to the Isle of Wight in September 2007 to visit some of the churches for Ride and Stride. We left the car at Lymington taking our bikes on the ferry and starting our cycling as soon as we got to Yarmouth. Unfortunately there were not many churches open in the Yarmouth area that year so we cycled to Cowes, crossing to East Cowes on the ferry. That was where Martin realised he had left his cycling helmet at the last church and had to cross the ferry yet again to retrieve it! From there we did a loop back to Yarmouth. It was pretty hard cycling, especially going south from East Cowes, into the wind and up hill! We visited lots of churches, even if they were not participating in Ride and Stride, (one had a wedding taking place), and everyone was very friendly and welcoming. Our last stop was the beautiful thatched church outside Yarmouth which was also not open but we were still able to admire it. It was a pretty exhausting day but well worth the journey. This year we might try the other side of the island and hopefully there will be a few more participating churches in the scheme. That would encourage more people to visit from the mainland for the day and appreciate the spectacular scenery and warm welcome on the Island.

Sue King

St Peter & St Paul, Thruxton, Hampshire

Some years ago my wife, Fiona, and I were asked to man Privett Church for an hour on the second Saturday in September. We were to provide a drink and biscuits to cyclists participating in the annual Hampshire and the Islands Historic Churches Trust sponsored bike ride.

This provided my introduction to this event.

In 2002, when my son, Cameron, was 10 years old, we decided to take part. The first two years we visited local churches but became more ambitious in 2004 when, for three consecutive years, we cycled round parts of the Isle of Wight.

Between 2007 and 2012 we kept to the mainland, venturing into Sussex and Wiltshire and in 2008 making a circular tour around the Meon and Itchen valleys.

2008 was the first year that a group of walkers from our parish participated by visiting churches in Winchester and met up with the cyclists for lunch. The following year the walkers visited churches in Chichester and met the cyclists for lunch at Boxgrove Priory.

Last year we headed north and cycled 74 miles to visit friends in Oxfordshire.

It would be impossible to give justice to the benefits we, as participants, have gained from our experiences. All the churches we have visited have 'an ambience of spirituality' that many will recognise.

Nevertheless, there are several churches that have captured our imagination and led to subsequent visits.

On the Isle of Wight we were struck by the impressive Quarr Abbey which is near to the Fishbourne ferry terminal. It should be noted that the monks serve delicious refreshments and cakes in the adjacent coffee shop

We enjoyed seeing the church at Freshwater Bay, which is thatched, but found the near vertical climb up the hill on the Ventnor road quite a challenge.

Boxgrove Priory, to the east of Chichester, was striking and contrasted with the simplicity of Tangmere, just a short distance away, where casualties from the Second World War are buried.

Sandham Memorial Chapel, just off the A34 south of Newbury, which has been painted by Stanley Spencer with scenes of the First World War, is also well worth visiting.

If you are interested in riding, striding or travelling by car please take part. Why not visit churches that you have never seen the inside of and raise funds, which are shared between the Trust and your local parish?

Ian Hughes.

Holy Trinity, Privett, Hampshire