

"Wouldn't it be fun," says my ever-enthusiastic wife, "to take the grandchildren on the Prudential Freecycle Ride London?" So that was decided upon! six years ago, 2013.

For one reason or another, after we'd registered to enter and received our distinctive, bilious green and ill-fitting tabards, the parents and/or the grandchildren said they couldn't/wouldn't be coming after all. Same thing happened in 2014. In 2018 we decided to just register and do it by ourselves, although by no means alone; our rider registration numbers were 20,000-ish and 38,000-ish.

On the big day, we duly reported to our chosen "**Led ride to Start of FreeCycle**" location at Kingston-Upon-Thames, well before the published time of 09.00. Apparently we, and several others, had not seen some later information, indicating 09.30, so, by the time the group had been marshalled together, we'd been hanging around for an hour, chatting. In the meantime some 40 riders, of all ages and abilities and cycle types, had arrived.

***The 'folder' in the cargo box is for mum,
joining them at the Freecycle start.
The young lady's bike is tucked behind dad.
No wonder he had electric assistance!***



The ride leader, in a green vest, the marshalls in pink, and the back marker and sweeper in red, all volunteers, were kindly giving us a day of their time and experience. I salute them thankfully: we must have tried their collective patience.

At last we were on our way, from Kingston, through Richmond Park, passing the London Wetland Centre, over Putney Bridge, through Fulham, then Brompton Cemetery, Earls Court and "embassy-land" to the walls of Buckingham Palace and Birdcage Walk; our arrival/departure point for the FreeCycle. With a final

reminder to be back by 15.00, we were free to join the masses of riders tootling around the FreeCycle circuit.



***Riders in The Mall, coming away from Buckingham Palace
(Photo courtesy of FreeCycle at Prudential RideLondon 2018)***



We'd never seen such a mass of cyclists, much less been part of it, from tiny tots, through every shape and size and age, in all shades of colour. And that applied to the bikes too! Tandems, low-slung and high-rise specials, tricycles, trailers containing dogs, children, boom-boxes; you name it, it was there.

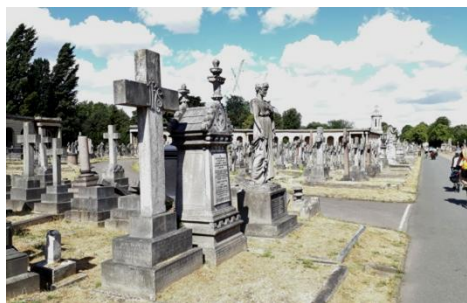
NB shoulder-level saddle & handlebar

It was an invigorating and liberating experience, to be one of thousands, weaving through the shoal of multicoloured mobile humanity, all full of bonhomie and goodwill towards others. Naturally, there were one or two 'boy-

racers', aiming to break the land speed record – or, more likely, someone's bones; mostly we were relaxing in the glow of sailing down the Mall, the Strand or Whitehall, sightseeing, without dodging tiresome taxis or pesky pedestrians.

Having visited a couple of the 'Festival Zones', for refreshment and/or amusement, e.g., bicycle polo, bike-powered smoothie-making, all too soon it was time to make our way to the assembly point, to retrace our route back to Kingston-upon-Thames. All in all, an enriching and life-affirming day out.

If you've never done it before, look out for next year's event and treat yourself to some fun.



Through Brompton Cemetery



and Richmond Park