

## Rideout to West Dean Gardens

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Photos by Lesley Smith

23 June, 2024

It was with bated breath that we kept a keen eye on the unseasonal weather leading up to our ride-out on 23rd June but, thankfully, the day started with blue skies and sun – never quite reaching the peak temperatures predicted but certainly providing a dry and enjoyable day for the 8 bikes and 2 pillions who met at The Departure Lounge for our ride out. Destination this time was to West Dean Gardens, near Chichester, a beautiful and historic garden on the South Downs, with a satisfying menu of options for the lunch at the end. Special mention should go to Adrian who many members will know is still recovering from an accident; the two-hour ride was his longest without breaks so far, and he was full of spirit and fun at the end. Thanks to Trish and Nick who were riding part of the route back with him.



Meeting at The Departure Lounge



Phil's C1 in Alresford

The ride itself had a mixture of familiar and not-so-familiar roads for those who joined us. Very little riding was done on main roads which meant that the superb country roads and lanes were relatively clear of traffic. Lots of bicycles out – two different horse hazards along the way – but the clearness of roads meant none of us got lost and we could thoroughly enjoy the beautiful villages, hamlets and scenery en-route.

Sad to say, Phil – bravely keeping up with us on his C1 - suffered a puncture quite early on but no other mishaps along the way, thank goodness.

The 2-hour route embraced a variety of roads starting from the picturesque Candover Valley that winds through chalk downs and woodlands from the base of Farleigh Hill to the Itchen Valley at Itchen Abbas (a distance of 6 miles); our

trip wound from Farleigh Wallop through the hamlets and villages of Nutley, Axford, Preston Candover, Chilton Candover, Brown Candover, Totford, Swarraton and Northington. From there, we continued to transverse a variety of wooded and rural roads, all areas of outstanding beauty, catching up towards the end of the ride on some sights those who joined us for the Queen Elizabeth Country Park ride may remember.



Country Lanes



Old Winchester Hill to Clanfield

Another 30 minutes or so of riding was added from there, however, to take us through villages in the Idsworth Valley, Kingley Vale and finally on to West Dean (which is also adjacent to the Weald and Downland Living Museum (for those who might like to run a similar ride of their own).

A fantastic day out was enjoyed by all and a special mention, too, to Mike and Lesley who, stalwarts as ever, stepped in to be back marker for us on the day.



Arrival at West Dean Gardens

*Many thanks to Paul and Marion for planning and leading the ride and writing this article, Mike and Lesley for being "tail-end Charlie" and for Lesley' photos.*