

ISIS CYCLISTS CTC: ANNUAL REPORT MARCH 2022–FEBRUARY 2023

INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF THE YEAR

Isis has had a really encouraging year, our fifteenth. At last, we have been able to return to a pre-pandemic programme, with three Saturday rides per month and a Midweek ride, as well as an evening ride in the summer months. We've noticed larger numbers of riders and more new riders turning up than we did prior to the pandemic. And our records show that riders who were new in the previous year are staying with us. See below for statistics.

The monthly Isis newsletter goes to 386 members. We've recently recruited three new leaders (bringing the total number to 18), all of whom are joining Cycling UK. This is really useful, and allows some of our longer-serving leaders to take time off to care for family members. We promoted the benefits of membership in our March newsletter, following two upsetting accidents. Luckily, both of our members are recovering, having not been seriously injured, but the psychological effects of being hit by a car are a different matter, and worthy of financial compensation. John Skevington has very kindly offered to support one member who has been finding the process of making a claim very dispiriting.

Joyriders has also been enjoying some success (with 116 followers on Eventbrite), and three founder members are training as leaders for Joyriders and also joining Isis rides, which is exactly what we hoped for.

In June, we organised a weekend away near Henley, in a Retreat House which has ample accommodation, most of it en-suite, and a full catering service. 35 people came for the weekend, including 9 who camped opposite the house. It was an extremely hot day when we rode out in small groups, climbing into the Chilterns and supporting each other when flagging. However, it was a very successful event, and we will definitely return there at some point.

On the 20th August, we ran our 50 mile challenge ride, now established for 9 years! We rode to Evenley in Northamptonshire and the enjoyable ride was made more eventful with a couple of unplanned turns, which brought some of us to a roundabout in Bicester for a tea stop!

I ran a ride in October, visiting the five sites in Oxford where women had been killed by vehicles during the last 5 years. I was very moved when four young colleagues of Ling Felce turned up, having heard about it on the grapevine via the Isis newsletter. They all wore commemorative T shirts and one young man said that he had not ridden a bike since he was 7 years old! He did really well.

We were delighted to hear that Ellen Lee, our co-founder and Isis leader-in-chief was named as one of last year's '100 Women in Cycling'. The award is richly deserved, although Ellen is far too modest to crow about it. It's a bit disappointing that Cycling UK no longer organise a celebration, as they did when they first launched the award (they even held one online during the pandemic). Cyclox is going to publish interviews with the three women from Oxford who were nominated in 2022 (the other two were nominated for their work with Cyclox, and Joyriders).

COMPLAINT

In September, we received an official complaint against one of our ride leaders, which was resolved with help from Cycling UK. Obviously we deeply regret that this happened, but feel that it has encouraged the entire leaders' group to reconsider and clarify our aims and values, which has been a very positive process. These are now available via our website for all our members to see.

RIDE STATISTICS

With thanks to Lucy Wright, who once again compiled the facts and figures from leaders' ride sheets.

Between March 2022 and February 2023 we ran 49 'regular' rides, plus the 50-mile challenge and some pop-up rides, which are not reported, as they're not formal Isis rides.

Overall, participation was roughly 14% up on 2021-2022 year, and 30% up on 2018-2019. In terms of unique participants, 105 women rode with us, an increase of 31%. Of this total, 67% were repeat riders (some of whom were new last year) and 33% were new to the group (previous years' figures are very similar). The table below summarises the average number of riders on our different ride formats:

Regular rides	Distance (miles)	Timing (per month)	Total rides taking place	Average riders	Change from 2021-2022
Short	10-12	1 st Saturday	11	14	none
Medium	15-20	2 nd Saturday	12	16	+4
Long	20-30	3 rd Saturday	10	16	+3
Midweek	30+	Varies	12	9	+2
Evening Social	Varies	Varies	4	9	N/A
Special rides				Total riders	Change from 2021-2022
50-mile challenge				21	+2
White Bike ride				11	N/A

Figures have been rounded.

BIKE BUDDIES

Bike Buddies WhatsApp group is now used largely for social communications, with other groups having been set up to communicate about specific rides, tours etc. We enjoyed several popular pop-up rides during the year, including to Brill and Princes Risborough, and anyone can offer a pop-up ride on Bike Buddies, making it clear if they are not a registered Isis leader. As mentioned last year, WhatsApp is being used for friends to arrange rides together at any time, with the result that more women are riding more, not necessarily on organised Isis rides. And that's great.

IN SUMMARY...

We are very pleased to have had good turnouts during the last year, even during some of the dodgy weather this last winter. After 15 years, we feel that we are doing something right, though we're open to suggestions, and have recently invited feedback from our members to see if anyone has ideas for different styles of ride.

On a more sombre note, some of us have noted deteriorating driving standards and are extremely disappointed that the Government declined to publicise the changes to the Highway Code sufficiently, resulting in much misunderstanding of our place on the roads. Our members are supporting the Vision Zero initiative, but it has been very slow to get off the ground, perhaps due to other priorities at the local authorities, beleaguered as they are by the attacks on their plans to reduce pollution, make roads safer and make progress in tackling climate change.

Jane Carlton Smith

12 March 2023