

SPONSORED RIDE & STRIDE

Ride & Stride 2020

The sponsorship and donations received from the annual Ride & Stride event form a major part of The Friends of Kent Churches income and this then reflects on the financial support that can be passed on to churches in grants. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, running the 2020 Kent Ride and Stride hung in the balance up until a matter of weeks before the event. Fortunately, the pandemic situation in our area was such that the committee were able to spring into action and run an event which proved to be a resounding success, both in terms of the enjoyment had by participants and the funds raised. To boost everyone's spirits 12 September 2020 proved to be the most beautiful warm late summer day, ideal for riding and striding!

Nationally, 2020 saw 23 counties participating in Ride and Stride. This is a lower number than in recent years when more typically 30+ counties have participated. Understandably, a number of counties felt unable to organise a ride and stride event in the light of the uncertainty of the pandemic in some parts of the country. Despite the depletion in counties participating in 2020, a magnificent £1,230,000.00 was raised nationally. Kent ranked 3rd out of the 23 counties participating in relation to monies raised. Ride and Stride was one of the largest community activities taking place in Kent in 2020. Financially we were only surpassed by Norfolk and Suffolk in our monies raised – there lies the challenge for 2021!

The total amount raised by Kent Ride and Stride, including Gift Aid, was £133,880 falling by only 5% in comparison to the total raised in 2019 (£140,602); an amazing effort during the pandemic. The number of churches who had been willing to open was up by 6 churches on the previous year with 713 listed for 2020, although when it came to the day, unsurprisingly, there were quite a number unable to open due to COVID restrictions. The number of churches with sponsored participants was down by 11% on 2019, although there had been an equivalent rise in churches with sponsored participants in 2019, so all in all the 2020 numbers were remarkable in the light of the pandemic. The number of sponsored riders, striders and church sitters was considerably down on the previous year, falling from 956 to 690. However, the amount raised per person sponsored increased by nearly 25% to £194.00 and this followed on from a 17% rise in 2019.

The estimated total number of visitors welcomed by churches open on the day was well down on the previous year and totalled 6,564 (2019 = 10,200). Quite a number of participants did not return their churches visited sheet in 2020 and this may well be due in part to the fact that so many churches were closed and had no sign-up sheets. A particular effort will be made in 2021 to ensure that churches do display a sign-up sheet if they are unable to welcome riders and striders personally.

The church raising the most money this year was St Lawrence, Mereworth, a fitting tribute to the enormous efforts of Tessa and Andrew Wells and family who have contributed so much to the Friends of Kent Churches and Kent Ride and Stride over the years. Shortly after the event Tessa and Andrew moved to Wiltshire and will be greatly missed.

The most visited church was again St George, Ivychurch with 107 visitors (one more than last year!) and Nigel Matcham visited a staggering 87 churches just pipping last year's winner, Darren Blundell who this year visited 84 churches.

Again this year, there were some wonderful achievements and stories from participants. Young and Old (but all young at heart) took part. Geoff Riches from St Michael and All Angels, Tenterden cycled around 12 churches – and celebrated his 94th birthday the following week. Sophie Amos from St Botolph's Lullingstone scootered to 6 churches – just before her 3rd birthday. Her older brother Henry took part in his third Ride and Stride with his grandmother and walked and scootered around 8 churches in just over 2 hours. It was a 30th anniversary ride for Rob Seall. He followed the same route that he covered 30 years ago. Nick Fox and Sam Boyce took photos at every church they cycled to, as did Robert Coe and his daughter Katherine who are regular church striders and sitters.



Rob Seall – still looking good on his 30th anniversary ride. Cycling for Golden Green Mission Hall.



All smiles: Shirley Goodsell, Sue Baumbach and Heather Mackay from St Leonards Church, Deal having visited 25 churches.



Nick Fox and Sam Boyce from Christ Church URC Westgate-on-Sea – photographed themselves at all the 44 churches they visited!



Robert Coe also took photos of every church visited with his daughter Katherine during their stride supporting St Nicholas, Sholden.



St John the Baptist Church, Sutton at Hone Girls Aloud! Pat de Winton striding out.



Sophie and Harry Amos on their scooters supporting St Botolph's, Lullingstone.

Organising the day involves a huge effort by the committee and area and local organisers. The Friends are most grateful to them and the many participants and sponsors. Half the money raised by each participant goes to their nominated church if they so wish, the remainder coming to the Friends of Kent Churches to finance the grants programme. In 2020, Ride and Stride returned £56,514 of the sponsorship / donations raised (£133,880) to churches nominated by riders/ striders and welcomers. The remainder of the funding assisted the Friends of Kent Churches in paying out grants to Kent Churches totalling £89,817, with a further £157,572 of grant offers waiting to be claimed at the year-end due to project work continuing into the following year.

Ride & Stride now has a Vice Chairman and a New Treasurer

The Ride and Stride committee are delighted that Roland Niblett has accepted the position of Vice Chairman. As many are aware, Roland has made an amazing contribution to Ride and Stride over many years, particularly as treasurer and he now continues to help out in so many ways. His treasurer role is a hard act to follow but Susan Hooper has enjoyed taking up the challenge for 2020. Needless to say, Roland handed over exemplary records. Susan looks forward to meeting many of the area and local organisers in person when we are able to meet up. For now, just a picture!



Susan, the new treasurer, setting off from Cranbrook for her Ride and Stride 2020.

Farewell

Ride and Stride said a fond farewell to Andrew and Tessa Wells who have contributed so much. They have shared their beautiful home, Mere House, for preparation and distribution of paperwork and delightful socials as well as having taken on so many responsibilities themselves over the years. In 2020 Tessa continued to oversee the printing of all the material for Ride and Stride, despite an imminent move and Andrew and Tessa hosted the annual area organiser event in their garden with a delicious tea.

Deborah Robinson, our County Organiser stepped down after the 2020 event and the Committee are very grateful to her for her contribution over recent years. Lucy O'Flaherty has taken on the role for 2021.

Ride & Stride Saturday 11th September 2021

The next Ride & Stride day is on Saturday 11th September 2021. Let us pray for good weather for a third year running and that this tremendous collective effort to support the churches of Kent continues to flourish.