



Ride The Downs with *Diana Norman*



I have always cycled but not very regularly and not any great distance. I kept an old bike to travel short journeys when I didn't want to take the car – never more than 5 miles.

In the six months before starting the Ride the Downs project I was starting to go further. I would go out about once a week and try to complete a 10 mile circuit.

I have always enjoyed being active and my favourite pastimes were walking and swimming. I walked the South Downs Way in 2016 but was not particularly interested in cycling, especially off road as I couldn't see the point in it.

As I became more interested in cycling the Ride the Downs project scheme appealed to me as it involved riding with others, which I had rarely done, and making new friends. I was able to discover new routes which were easily accessible from my local town and I went much further afield than I had ever done. I was so keen to continue that I purchased a new mountain bike more suitable to taking me over the downs.

One of my favourite cycles is up to Bo Peep from Seaford and along the South Downs Way to Firle Beacon, I particularly enjoy the down hill section into Southease. It is lovely being up on 'the tops' even in the winter with the beautiful wide-ranging views.



I am certainly more cycle active now and try to cycle 3-4 times a week. Once a week I join my local cycling club, Cycle Seahaven, on one of their many rides available. I have surprised myself by completing a 30 mile section of the South Downs Way and the whole length of the Downs Link patch to Shoreham.

I would encourage anyone thinking of taking up a more active lifestyle to choose cycling and in particular join a scheme like Ride the Downs. It will give you the confidence and knowledge to cycle on your own, to learn the incredible number of traffic free routes available and to immerse yourself in the stunning environment of the South Downs.