

Hallo everybody

Here is the latest issue of Winged Wheel which I really hope that you enjoy. I also hope that, by the time you read this, the weather will have changed a bit so that it feels more like Summer and encourages you to cycle more.



Yesterday I went on a club ride which was a bit different from usual and I thoroughly enjoyed it. We went to Campsea Ashe station for coffee as there was a special event to celebrate 165 years since the station was opened and there was a band playing then we went to Grundisburgh for a picnic lunch by the church. After this Paula, our esteemed leader, and I opted to go to Raydon for tea as planned. We always like to go there on the first Sunday of the month during the summer as they have such lovely cakes and we are always made welcome. The route was very imaginative, if a bit hilly, especially in the Chattisham area!

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this issue. We are off to Denmark in the middle of June and, as we will be taking our bikes, I can feel a Winged Wheel article coming on already! Perhaps you are going somewhere interesting and could write something too. Happy cycling.

Judy

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President's Ramblings

Where has the year gone, here we are in June already. Hopefully by the time you read this we will have had some sun. From my point of view, gone are the days when no matter what the weather I was out on my bike.

I am conscious that some of you are too young to remember the 60's, but back then I recall wet days from start to finish, snow drifts and howling winds, but none of this put us off. We were of course all some bit younger, and most of us were time trialling and road racing spring, summer and autumn. Those winter miles were so important to fitness and racing performance. They were also important to those who were signed up for the regular club tours. Club tours that took us to Ireland, Scotland, Europe, Norway and all over England. Invariably a bank holiday meant a Youth Hostel tour to such places as Isle of Wight, New Forest, Derbyshire and the Peak district to name but a few.



Fond memories of Southern Ireland, where every morning it rained till 10.00am then was sunny for the rest of the day. Memories of Max and his trike and managing to fall off while standing still. Colin Kindred's shivers lasting 2 hrs after we went swimming in the harbour at Cape Clear. Two weeks in northern Scotland in scorching hot Sunshine and having to stop to scrape tar off our tyres. Of running into Dave Incol and bending my Holdsworth. The trip to Cape Wrath via the ferry and off-road track. The Europe trip took in Germany, Switzerland, Austria and Lichtenstein. We took a sleeper down the Rhine valley to Freiburg then a circular route from there, taking in Basel through the Alps, climbing the Silvestris Strasse the Arlberg and Hohenberg passes and round lake Constance back to Freiburg. Riding through the unlit tunnels of the Arlberg was alarming and one of our number strayed off the road hitting his head on the rough rock wall. Fond memories of Norway were "Sugar sandwiches" and a ride on the Flam railway. Very early we learned there were no pubs or cafes and few shops where we could get lunchtime food. And since we were hostelling and only carrying basics sugar sandwiches on one occasion were all we had. Miles became an issue, many roads were not shown in detail, and often the point at which a river inlet was to be crossed was not particularly accurate. This resulted in many days being longer than planned. Often more than 100 miles with full 14 days of touring baggage. Flam railway is a narrow-gauge railway that spirals in tunnels in the rock before flowing down a steep valley to the edge of Aurlandsfjorden. We had taken a train across the Plateau from Voss to Geilo and hopped off to do the Flam, but our cycles and luggage stayed on the mainline train. It was a strange feeling, but on arrival at Geilo on the next train we were all re-united. At the time the railway staff loaded and unloaded according to the ticket, we as passenger just boarded, without the rush to load and unload bikes, very efficient.

In my youth I confess to having little knowledge of Suffolk roads, so I had to hang on to the group otherwise I was lost. My knowledge of Suffolk slowly built up, but it still did nothing to widen my geographical knowledge further afield, so I had little input in the decisions or organization of these adventures. It's probably a bit late in the day but I am grateful to those who did the research and planning to make those adventures possible. All before the internet of course. Here's to future adventures.

Maurie.

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Secretary's Notes

We held the CTC Suffolk AGM at the end of April. Here's an update on the changes made then. (The full minutes may be included elsewhere in this edition of Winged Wheel).

- We have a new organiser for our Thursday Rides, David Wake, who replaces Richard Watson.
- We have a new club Treasurer, Geoff Kingston, who replaces Jon Gorringe.
- At the AGM we expressed our thanks to Richard and Jon for all the work they have put in over many years, and welcomed David and Geoff as their replacements.
- For the 2nd year in a row I have failed to find a volunteer to replace myself as club Secretary. Instead I have suggested continuing to split out responsibilities from this role. Last year we introduced a Minutes Secretary, a post which Matt Tong volunteered to fill following an appeal made after the 2023 AGM. This year Matt has agreed to extend his role to organising our Committee meetings as well as minuting them, and I will be working with him on the handover.
- I will continue to act as Club Secretary in the roles of liaison with Cycling UK HQ, our membership and the general public. Matt and I will probably work together when it comes to organising next year's AGM.



The full Committee for 2024-25 is :-

President	Maurie Parish
Vice President (representing Wolsey RC)	Maureen Nichols
Secretary	John Bryant
Meetings/Minutes Secretary	Matt Tong
Registration Secretary	Stephen Read
Treasurer	Geoff Kingston
Safeguarding	Jan Brown
Sunday Rides Coordinator	Michael Scott
Thursday Rides Coordinator	David Wake
Website Administrator	Bob Whitehouse

Magazine Editor	Judy Scott
Right to Ride	Mike Havard

John

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Sunday Rides Ramblings

It's a Thursday morning and rain has stopped play once again. I find myself wondering if the weather is really that bad this year or have I gradually become more of a fair weather cyclist these days. Probably it's a bit of both.

Our Sunday Rides are still reasonably well supported but, for some reason, don't reach the numbers seen on Thursday Rides. Over the last three months we have had a full programme of rides from Ipswich to all points of the compass - apart from due east into the sea! Each Sunday we have an Easy paced ride, ideal for new members, and a Medium paced ride for those wishing to ride a bit faster and further. We also have more informal Bank Holiday rides starting later with a coffee stop and the option to decide on the day whether there is demand to extend the rider to lunch time and beyond.



Unlike the new Thursday Rides Co-ordinator, I do have the advantage of a Committee to ensure a varied programme of two rides every Sunday. Looking through previous Rides Lists makes me aware that we rely heavily on a small nucleus of very dedicated leaders and I am grateful for their invaluable contribution.

CTC Suffolk has traditionally been Ipswich based, as the main centre of population, but Suffolk is a large county and Ipswich is far from being centrally located. I think attempts have been made in the past, unsuccessfully, to organise group rides in other parts of the county. If any member, or group of members, of Cycling UK feels there may be a call for organised rides in their particular area please get in touch with me and I will help facilitate things in any way I can.

Michael Scott

Sunday Rides Coordinator

Patrick Lucardi

It is with great sadness that we learnt of Patrick Lucardi's death on 13th May. Many of you will remember Patrick as a regular rider on both Thursday and Sunday rides over the years. He had been in care for 13 weeks but had been unwell for several years. Our thoughts are with his wife Di and his family.

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CTC Suffolk – A Member Group of Cycling UK MINUTES of CTC Suffolk Annual General Meeting

Held Tuesday 30th April 2024, 19:30hrs at Ipswich Sports Club, Henley Road, IP1 4NJ

1. Welcome by the President:

Maurie Parish (and chairman of the meeting) welcomed all to this year's AGM including our guest speaker Jenny Box from Cycling UK.

2. Apologies for absence:

John Bryant listed those who previously gave their apologies as Mike Havard, Bob Whitehouse, Jan Brown, Maureen Nichols, Ken Nichols, Alison Parish, Margaret Hancock, Philip Hancock, Judith Hedges, Paula Roberts, Anna Brennan, Keith Halton and Nicola Halton.

3. Minutes of the 2023 AGM:

Maurie Parish asked the AGM if last year's Minutes were acknowledged as an accurate record. These were proposed as true by Richard Watson, seconded by Stephen Read and accepted by a majority vote.

4. Matters arising:

None.

5. Secretary's Summary of the Committee's Reports for 2023-2024:

John Bryant provided a brief summary of the Committee's Reports, except the Treasurer's Report which was given by Jon Gorringer (refer to item 6, below). All the Committee's Reports providing more detailed information can be obtained by browsing the folder containing all the meeting documents [here](#).

John's summary stated we had 981 members, down by 118 from last year, with over 100 members completing at least one ride. There were *on average* at least 20 people attending each Thursday and Sunday. Ride leaders could find cafes easily but struggled with pubs since the covid pandemic when a lot of public houses have closed down.

John acknowledged on behalf of the committee the effort that Michael Scott and Richard Watson have continued to put in to make Sunday and Thursday rides a success. Richard is now standing down after doing the job since 2017.

During the year, Matt Tong was co-opted by the Committee to take the minutes of meetings, and he has now agreed to take a greater share in the Secretary's duties by taking over the organisation of meetings. John and Matt will continue to work closely together over the coming year.

6. Statement of Accounts:

Jon Gorringe gave his brief summary of our clubs accounts having distributed to those attending the AGM an 'Expenditure Statement' for the last 12 months ending 31 March 2024 and his associated 'Balance Sheet' which can be found by browsing the folder, as mentioned in item 5 above.

Overall, the club made a £161 surplus ending 31 March 2024. Though down on the £558 surplus made the previous year, there are significant reasons both in income and expenditure that contribute for this expected drop. In no particular order, one reason was attributed to a lower income by fewer organised cycling events, such as our Copdock Audax and the Santa Special, each had a low attendance. A big thank you to Andy Terry for his continued hard work and dedication in organising these and future audax rides. Another key reason for the drop in surplus was our decision to write off all the remaining depreciation costs on our clubs equipment / assets that had been spread over past and future years.

Jon's overall message though was positive and upbeat, we are in a very healthy, solid financial position which allows us to continue making donations to reputable local cycling charities of our choice.

Maurie thanked both Jon, as Treasurer and Jo Rainbird our auditor, before asking everyone for a vote to approve our statement of accounts which was proposed by Richard Watson and seconded by Michael Scott before passed by majority vote.

Jon advised that after 7.5 years as Treasurer and as indicated at the 2023 AGM he would be standing down after this 2024 AGM.

7. Election of Officials:

The following positions requiring replacements for 2024-25 were voted and passed by majority vote:

Treasurer – Jon Gorringe is standing down. **Geoff Kingston** proposed by Richard Watson, seconded by Glen Smith.

Thursday Rides Coordinator – Richard Watson is standing down. **David Wake** proposed by Bob Whitehouse, seconded by Paul Fenton.

All other committee members remain as they are, after it was asked from the 'AGM floor' if there were any other nominations for any other roles? As the response was a clear no, the election of the committee was proposed by Richard Watson and seconded by Joy Kent with a unanimous vote all in favour. The list of elected members for 2024-25 are:

CTC Suffolk 2024-25 Committee

President	Maurie Parish
Vice President (representing Wolsey RC)	Maureen Nichols
Secretary	John Bryant
Meetings/Minutes Secretary	Matt Tong
Registration Secretary	Stephen Read
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Website Administrator	Bob Whitehouse
Magazine Editor	Judy Scott
Right to Ride	Mike Havard

8. Club "Person of the Year" and Other Trophies for 2024:

The following awards went to:

Club Person of the Year – jointly shared by John Bryant and Richard Watson (Proposed by Paul Fenton, seconded by David Etherington)

Sunday Attendance – Judy Scott

Ladies Trophy – Judy Scott

Thursday Attendance – Paula Roberts

Free Wheel Competition – Cliff Keeble

9. Any Other Business:

None.

The Chairman wound up the meeting which closed at 19:57.

10. Short Presentation by Jenny Box from Cycling UK:

Jenny Box, Deputy Director for New Funding & New Programmes for Cycling UK gave a presentation on 'Strategy 2024+' which is publicly being launched on 12 June 2024.

Afterwards we were invited to ask her questions relating to her presentation and share with her any other of our concerns or queries related to their interaction and efforts to work with Local Councils, Developers, Cycling Organisations etc.

11. CTC Suffolk AGM 2024 – Attendee List (all 20 are full members of Cycling UK)

Jenny Box, John Bryant, David Etherington, Peter Evans, Paul Fenton, Jon Gorringer, Joy Kent, Geoff Kingston, Laurie Parish, Stephen Read, Judy Scott, Michael Scott, Glen Smith, Jane Stanley, Joanne Steward, Matt Tong, David Wake, Ray Wand, Richard Watson, Derek Worrell.

Matt Tong

Meetings/Minutes Secretary

CTC Suffolk, a member group of Cycling UK.

Email: suffolkctc@gmail.com 3rd May 2024

Springtime Cycling

May – June, the very best time to cycle! Those first rides with the lightest clothing and the best bike bring days when the heart sing! No more the multi-layers and cold feet of winter; the battle of headwinds sapping our strength. We are borne anew into a new world of blossoms, new greens, textured landscapes of subtle light and shade and warm airs on our legs. Our legs themselves feel stronger, more supple, and the peddling a relaxing flow.

Our destinations also are more ambitious as we stretch towards new lanes, more distant villages, rarely visited pubs and cafes. Adventures are plotted, planned tours come nearer to reality. Joys awheel are shared.

The lanes, bosky with new frothy growth become narrower. Our vision is led forward by the curve of the lane, the dip of slope; altogether a more intimate experience. Our 'sweet spot' riding becomes more frequent as we are lifted spiritually by the oneness with the bucolic rural scene. Early morning and late afternoon birdsong welcomes us in to the natural world. Pause and listen. The faint hum of tiny wing beats witness the richness of diversity on warm still days. Faint aromas of cows parsley, wet grass and wild garlic pervade the evening air. We spin, dip, and drive up, responding to the subtle changes in terrain in answer to the roads call. Breathing becomes deep and sweet, the heart quickens and the mind is refreshed.

'If this be madness let us n're be sane.'

Paul Fenton.

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The mammoth cycle ride **around Suffolk Churches...**

on Saturday 14th September 2024

by Rachel Sloane

Every year, on the second Saturday in September, a huge cycle ride across England attracts keen cyclists as well as those who occasionally ride. Participants choose their own route from hundreds of churches, visiting as many or as few churches as they wish. Anyone can take part and it is supported by many people who don't attend a church but value their historic place in our communities.



In Suffolk alone usually over 500 churches and chapels of all denominations will open their doors on Ride and Stride Day, meeting cyclists, walkers and those in disability buggies, who are raising money to be shared between their chosen church and the Trust.

This national event started in Suffolk over 40 years ago from an idea of Judith Foord from Aldeburgh, who came up with the idea of a sponsored churches bike ride for Suffolk. Judith's idea of an historic churches sponsored cycle ride has now spread to over thirty counties in the UK, is called Ride and Stride, and has raised millions of pounds across the country since it began. Last year, (the 50th anniversary of the Suffolk Historic Churches Trust), a record £252,133 was raised in our county from Ride and Stride and a vintage car rally held on the same day.

A donation from the cyclist in lieu of sponsorship is also very welcome.

The money raised is given in grants, by Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, to churches, chapels and meeting halls so that the buildings can be preserved for future generations or improved with facilities such as a toilet or small kitchen, enabling more fundraising events to be held at the church.

To take part, download the list of churches open and the sponsorship form from the Trust website. Suffolk has been split into a number of areas, each with its Ride and Stride Area Organiser, and each parish has its own Local Organiser, so they will also be able to supply the necessary forms. (SHCT or your local church or chapel should have details of your own Area Organiser). Then, plan your route, to as many or as few churches and chapels as you like, wherever you like. Donations or sponsorship is easiest via JustGiving.



On the day, at manned churches, someone will welcome you and sign your form while, at unattended churches you can log in yourself. Afterwards, any cash donations should be returned to Suffolk Historic Churches Trust, telling them which Suffolk church you would like 50% of the money to go. Have a great day! Full details are on <https://shct.org.uk/ride-and-stride/>

A Wolsey Road Club Update

Well it's the 1st June and the day started cloudy and very breezy and is finishing sunny and breezy but there was NO rain!! Let's hope that this is a sign that summer has arrived. There were 8 dedicated souls on the club ride this morning, so even if it wasn't sunny and 20°C the club ride is proving quite resilient.

The year started off for the club with the Reliability Ride in February. 57 riders on the reliability ride and for the first time, CTC Suffolk for elevenses. The club volunteers really enjoyed you coming along as it broke up the gap between the reliability riders setting off and starting to come back. And I personally found it wonderful to see all your familiar faces. I hope you all found it a reasonable elevenses stop? We discussed the Reliability ride at a subsequent WRC's committee meeting and we would all love to welcome you back next year for elevenses.

The club is now looking forward to hosting 4 evening time-trials in July and an Open 10mile time-trial on Sat 13th afternoon. The evening timetrials are part of a season long series organised by: Plomesgate, Ipswich Bicycle Club, Stowmarket and District CC and Ipswich Triathlon Club. Ours are on the 1st 4 Tuesdays of July, HQ is Claydon Cricket and Community hall on Old London road. Come along to say hi if you are at a loose end.

In other news some of our club members, have been in the wars: Mick Pepper had a broken shoulder at the beginning of the year and not to be outdone Maureen Nichols decided to get a similar injury whilst walking in Colchester. They are now both mended or mending. Now those names should sound familiar to you as they are also both members of CTC Suffolk group which shows how strong the link between the 2 clubs are. In addition there are other names common to both clubs: Ken Nichols (of course), Stephen Searby, Bob Whitehouse, David Barton and a more recent one of Peter Fisk who has been to a couple of elevenses. (I'm sorry to anyone who I missed off the list, I am pushing the editors patience writing this article so close to publishing so have had to rely on my memory! For those that know me, relying on my memory now is a bit dangerous 😊)

Anyway I've bumbled enough for this catchup. I hope to see you all out on your cycles, enjoying a lovely calm, sunny, warm summer.

Karen Eaton

Chair of Wolsey Road Club

Suffolk Churches by Cycle: Framlingham

St. Michael's church in Framlingham is easy to find at the top of the town in a dominating position and visible from many miles away. Just in case an interesting what3words location is: "outright.snake.selection". Before entering, cast an eye towards the roof and you will see a row of fancy angels in lead looking down at you.

The church has a light, airy and substantial interior. On entering you go through modern protective glass doors with a pattern based on "The Glory", an impressive large image with clouds found above the altar and dating back to the early seventeenth century. It is spotlit which adds to its impact.

To your left of the entrance is a very grand and important organ, dating back to 1674.

It was given by Pembroke College, Cambridge.



Church roofs deserve to be inspected and are often overlooked. The local church expert Roy Tricker recommends lying down on a pew and to look up to view the roof details. Well worth the effort for this one as towards the walls, covering the hammer-beams is intricate fan vaulting in wood (this form of decoration is often seen in stone supporting pillars). There are another two points of interest high up in the church. One is what is left of a wall painting and represents The Trinity in a straightforward red and white design. It is visible from the entrance and is above a pillar.

The other high up item is to the right of the altar, a medieval helmet with a lion above it. It is known as "The Flodden Helm", suggesting it was worn at The Battle of Flodden. However, detailed research suggests it is a later jousting helmet but still of historic interest.

Before turning to the main event it is worth mentioning that the font is in remarkably good condition with stone carvings remaining undamaged. From the 1300's it has Christian

symbols around the top and four lions and woodwoses (wood spirits) around the base.

The star attractions are towards the altar, in the chancel. In this church the chancel is far larger than normal and it contains a number of large tombs of the Howard family, who were Dukes of Norfolk and lived at Framlingham Castle. In effect the area is a mausoleum. Of particular note is the tomb of Henry Fitzroy, an illegitimate child of Henry VIII.



The tomb of Henry Howard is extravagantly carved with a lot of bright colour.

Another Howard tomb has a series of high quality carved saints which escaped damage and destruction that often occurred during the Reformation.

As well as historic matters the church has a modern hatchment (diamond-shaped wooden panel) commemorating the 390th Bombardment Group which was based at Parham airfield in World War II. Finally, the church commissioned a set of modern furniture for the chancel in limed oak, including seats (upholstered in red), an altar, lectern and candle stands.



We often have club rides to Framlingham as it is just the right distance from Ipswich for elevenses and it has a good selection of cafes, pubs and a bakery. A welcome sight.

It is also worth having a peek inside the church as there is a lot of interesting things to see.

Derek Worrall

Icknield Way Ride (2022.09)

By Kearton Rees

Background

About 12 years ago I changed groups at work. That Summer, a colleague asked if I would like to join him and a few friends on their annual cycle tour in France, as one of their regulars had dropped out. We made a 9-day tour of Brittany that year, and have made a trip almost every year since. The exception was 2021 when Covid forced a cancellation. By 2022, the restrictions had eased so we settled on a ride in the UK - the Icknield Way Cycle Trail, a 170 mile (274 km) off-road route from Wallingford in Buckinghamshire to Thetford in Suffolk.

The Icknield Way Path, Trails and Our Route

The Icknield Way is a very old footpath, now with an associated cycle path and bridleway. It roughly follows the Chiltern Hills and is an extension of the better known Ridgeway. By chance, a few years earlier I had bought a second-hand book which told of its history and described the newly created (at the time of writing) cycle route. That was my starting point.



There is also a road equivalent running in parallel which I have used many times on motorbike rides to the west country. From the book I learned that both the Icknield Way and the Ridgeway are parts of a much longer route called the Chalk Way, that extends as far as the Dorset coast, around 400 miles long. It follows a limestone ridge and has been in use since the Stone Age. The attraction of the limestone upland in the Stone Age was that it bypassed the forests and bogs in lowland areas, was not overgrown easily, and at the bottom of the escarpment there are often springs to replenish water supplies.

Whilst the footpath has been there for millennia and is possibly the oldest road in Britain, the cycle path and bridleway date from around 1992. The footpath is marked on OS maps as are the cycle path and bridleway, although the latter are hard to pick out in places. An

Icknield Way web-site exists [3] with travel advice, and some accommodation info.. It also provides a set of GPX files [4] covering the route.

The change from the Ridgeway to Icknield Way occurs at Wallingford where the River Thames cuts through the ridge. After following the Chiltern Hills to Dunstable Downs, the cycle path heads around the north of Luton, south of Cambridge and Newmarket, up through the forestry south of Thetford, and ends at the start of Peddars' Way.

Our planned route was based on the web-sites' GPX files, with occasional variations, plus deviations to reach each night's accommodation. The first day included a ride from a supermarket near M4 J12 (Theale) to the start of the Icknield Way. The last trail day was extended from Thetford Forest to a hotel in Rickingham, followed by a gentle morning's ride back to Ipswich. We stayed in pubs, motels, and small hotels, all of which provided places for us to store our bikes securely.



The Bike

On the previous tours I had relied on my trusty Mercian road bike. It had coped with sections of bridleway, but my companions advised me that a mountain bike would be better for this trip. A look at a few dealers' web-sites introduced me to a whole new set of bike types / categories that I'd never heard of (I have just been a road rider & tourer.). A subsequent trawl through YouTube lead me to a number of videos about the Icknield Way Cycle Trail and off-road riding, including a comparison between a mountain bike and gravel bike on such routes. The mountain bike was better on the trickier sections as expected. The gravel bike was adequate off-road and better on road, which would comprise at least 40% of our route. I eventually settled on a gravel bike, and bought an Elan from Spa Cycles in Harrogate. Unfortunately I only had a week to get familiar with it before the start of the trip.

The Ride

Day 1 - Theale to Princes Risborough



Bright, and disgustingly early, we and our bikes were collected by minibus and trailer and travelled to our starting point, a supermarket near Junction 12 on the M4. The first section towards Wallingford was mostly gentle along dedicated cycle tracks and quiet roads, but with one road crossing followed by a very steep descent on loose gravel – my first on a laden bike. Even walking the bike down cautiously I was sliding. After a cafe lunch in Goring, we met up

with the Icknield Way east of Wallingford. It started across fields with a gentle gradient and we made steady progress until the rain started. At Lewknor the path cut under the M40 and joined an old railway line as far as Bledlow Cross then climbed up and over Wain Hill, followed by an enjoyable long downhill road section into Princes Risborough, and on to The Red Lion at Longwick.

Day 2 - Princes Risborough to Hockliffe (Dunstable)

One of the advantages I now see of bike packing along the entire Way is that you can stay on the ridge at night rather than having to drop down each evening, and climb back up the following morning. Today was the extreme example. I'm convinced that the person who produced the GPX files had not ridden the route they had devised, at least not this section.

After setting off along the road route, the cycle route suddenly turned sharp right and went up the very steep scarp slope to Whiteleaf Hill within what seemed to be a limestone stream bed. At least the stream was dry. To a man we pushed our laden bikes up it, and struggled doing so, especially on the mossy bits. Luckily it was still cool. Riding down would definitely not be advisable, and doing so in the wet would be suicidal given that the bottom end is a blind junction onto a busy B road. Once up Whiteleaf Hill we took time for a breather and to look at the views over Princes Risborough.

The next part was the trickiest and scariest I'd ever done off-road. Up and down wet, muddy, and leafy paths, the wheels flicking sideways over tree stumps, trying to work out the best way to brake on slippery downhill sections when you keep on building up speed – the extra weight of the panniers was not helping – and all without hitting anything or anyone, e.g. the odd person stepping out of a side path. I also realised that the CTC club rides had been making me soft. At about 1100 I spotted a sign to a cafe along the track and immediately started looking forward to my coffee and cake, only for us to carry on at the same pace for another hour and a half. Eventually, after 11 gruelling miles we dropped down into Wendover and looked for a cafe, and the sun came out. Whilst there, one of my companions spotted a road sign saying that our starting point was only 5 miles away, and to top that, our navigator informed us that we hadn't even completed gone a quarter of the planned day's mileage. After a bit more refreshment and learning that we weren't sure whether there was a restaurant near that night's accommodation, we opted to do the next part on road to save time.

We followed the Icknield Way road route, a good quality B road, through Tring, Ivinghoe, and past Ivinghoe Beacon before turning right and climbing the escarpment towards Whipsnade. Near the top of Bison Hill we met the cycle trail again and headed up it across dry, grassy slopes towards the beacon and high point on Dunstable Downs, and a well-earned ice lolly. The site gave us views over the vale, a gliding club, and in the distance, Pidstone and its windmill – the oldest in Britain. The last part of the day was a gentle down hill ride, eventually taking us onto the road again. We took a circuitous route around Dunstable, arriving at our motel on the A5 just as the light faded and the rain started. Luckily there was a diner next to the motel which offered burger-type meals.

Day 3 - Hockliffe to Heydon (Royston)

The rain had stopped by morning but it was still overcast. A short ride through Tebworth took us to the trail south of Toddington. The first part was steady progress along farm tracks and damp field-side paths before crossing a farm bridge over the M1, followed shortly after by a footbridge over the railway. The bridge had a



useful groove for bikes to run in alongside the steps, but it didn't allow for the extra width of

our panniers. From there a track up through woods, and over a stile, took us to Upper Sundon. After a brief section on road and crossing the A6, we re-joined the trail at the base of the, now diminished, escarpment and a steady slog led us up the 184m to the top of Telegraph Hill, the highest point on the trail. Another long gentle down-slope got us to a level section that by-passed Hitchin via a few scenic villages, after which it headed into Letchworth Garden City as the sun came out.

We took lunch in an excellent street-side cafe in the centre of the city whilst watching the world and its dog go by. After lunch our route wandered along the quieter roads of the city before crossing the A1(M) and heading out in a north-easterly direction to Ashwell to meet the alternative northern section of the trail. This was a dead straight track, incorporating part of the Harcamlow Way north of Royston. Along some fast but rutted sections of this I began to see the advantages of wider bars. I found myself moving about a lot to maintain control. We peeled off south east along a short (although it did not seem so at the time) energy-sapping track covered in loose but extra-large gravel to our motel alongside the A505 at Flint Cross. After a shower in the very quiet and comfortable quiet room, a good meal, and a few beers, I slept well.

Day 4 - Heydon to Exning (Newmarket)

The next day started brightly. We crossed the A505 and headed south to re-join the southern route which then headed along the remnants of the ridge to Heydon, Chisnall, and Elmdon. At one point, the trail crossed fields of cut straw on which we made good progress then, soon after entering a slippery tree-lined area, my rear wheel locked up. Clearing out some leaves, I set off only to have to stop 10 metres later with the rear mudguard completely clogged. A stiff stick helped me clear enough of it out to get going, only for it to recur a further 20 metres along. The soil was acting like glue and collecting any leaves and sticks that I rode across. This is where my companion's choice of mountain bikes with their wider, knobblier tyres and much higher mudguards can be seen as the better choice. After pushing the bike for ten minutes I met one of my colleagues who had come back thinking I had broken down. I stuck to foot power for the rest of that section. After a picnic lunch amidst showers in Linton, I decided that I'd be slowing everyone else down if I continued on the trail, so I headed onwards alone by road allowing the now-steady rain to rinse some of the mud off my bike.

Eventually as they do in the area, all roads led to Newmarket. The sun had come out again and my spirits had lifted. On checking my map, I discovered that our accommodation was somewhere just off the top of it. Undaunted, I headed off following road signs to Exning.

Newmarket merges into Exning so I stopped & asked directions once I thought I'd gone far enough. Two sets of partly contradictory directions later, I found our hotel. After showering, I wandered down to check my bike just as my colleagues arrived. Luckily they hadn't found that afternoon's part of the trail as bad as the morning's, with much of it being on gravel.

Day 5 - Exning to Rickingham (Diss)

The next morning started dull and overcast. Once out of Newmarket and alongside one of the busy horse training areas to the south east, the clouds released their load. It continued like that for over an hour, at which point a scenic diversion took us to Moulton and its the old Pack Horse Bridge. This is in very good condition (and worth a look if you are passing.) and has a ford by-pass for modern traffic. We crossed the bridge as we felt our feet were wet enough already, although it proved a lot steeper than it first appeared necessitating pushing.

From Moulton we headed to Needham Street, took a short section of trail, passed under the A14, and joined a flat track along Slade Bottom and on to Tuddenham. From there we followed signs to a woodland car park, which continued on to Cavenham Heath where the trail became sandy but still firm. This took us to Icklingham from where there were two route options:- head straight on, or turn right towards West Stowe Anglo Saxon village, then up through the King's Forest. We took the former.

On the previous areas of heathland the sand had been damp and compacted and easy to ride on. Later on however, much of the sand turned loose and dry which made for energy-sapping riding. When trying to go one way, the sand kept trying to get me to go in every other possible direction. Progress was possible if you could maintain momentum, but as soon as you stopped it was very difficult to restart. Sometime later, in an open meadow that had initially appeared grassy but subsequently gave way to a sandy substrate, we stopped to check our position and have a drink. This is when I realised that my chain was incredibly stiff and dirty. Although I had cleaned and thoroughly lubricated my chain before we left, I hadn't realised that the others had been wiping and re-oiling theirs every evening. A learning point. With partially cleaned and re-lubricated chains, the riding got a little easier. Half an hour of draining sandy paths later, we stopped along a section of (relatively) rocky path north of King's Forest, initially to shelter from a heavy shower, but we stayed on to eat a snack bar. Eventually the skies brightened and we plodded onward.

We reached Easton around 1330. I spotted the pub and salivated in anticipation of lunch and drink, only for our leader to ride on past. Just under an hour later we reached Knettishall

Heath and the car park that marks the formal end of the Icknield Way, and the start of Peddars' Way.

After a suitable congratulatory stop and the usual photos, we set off on the eight road miles to our accommodation at The Bell Inn in Rickinghall amidst the returning rain. After a hot shower, there followed a tasty and satisfying 'End-of-Trail' meal, a few bebies, and a good night's sleep.

Day 6 - Rickinghall to Ipswich

For a change, our last day was sunny and dry, and would be mostly on road. After a relaxed breakfast, we headed off towards Finningham. Since the B-road was quiet, we stayed on it through Bacton and on to Canham Green. From there we switched to more minor roads through Old Newton, Stowupland, and The Creetinges. Just before Needham Market, we crossed back over the A14 and headed onto Sally Woods Lane for a final bit of off-road riding, which took us to the A140. From there it was but a short ride to The Sorrel Horse in Barham and a well-earned drink and a cake. From Claydon we went our separate ways home.

Post-ride Info. & Thoughts

Some Statistics

Distances (km): Icknield Way (310), Tour Total (352), Daily average (64).

Speeds (kph): Ave. off-road (9-11, but on the more difficult bits it was <7).

Maps & Navigation

Our navigator planned our route and provided a set of GPX files, one per day, which he then used to guide us. I didn't have a portable sat. nav. at the time, so I bought three customised, waterproof, OS 1:50K maps from Aqua3 [5]. I like having a physical map and have used Aqua3 maps for several years for both walking and cycling, and have found them excellent.

Their site allows custom maps to be made up of a single area, multiple strips or squares per sheet all aligned to a point of your choosing, which is helpful for maps of trails.

Unfortunately the strips could only be horizontal (E-W) or vertical (N-S), whereas the Icknield Way is SW to NE, so compromises had to be made. If I had been able to print strips of diagonal routes directly**, I may have been able to keep to two map sheets instead of three.

** I have suggested this enhancement to Aqua3.

The Route

In planning, we overestimated significantly our likely speed on the off-road sections. If I were to do the trail again, I would consider adding an extra day to give sufficient time to do the Princes Risborough-Dunstable section properly, and maybe another day or two to take in some of the points of interest near to the route which we had identified previously, but which our rate of progress prevented us visiting.

The Bike

In hindsight, the choice of bike type was reasonable, but a few changes could have made things better:-

- 1) Having more time to sort out the riding position beforehand could have made for a more comfortable and relaxed ride. The stem fitted turned out to be longer than specified (Spa replaced this without question after the holiday.) so I got a bit saddle sore in the afternoons. I'm still refining the position. Also, I had selected a Brooks synthetic saddle based on a 12 mile test ride, but using it for six or seven hours per day over a week revealed that it wasn't as forgiving as the leather versions I have used previously. This has since been rectified.
- 2) This was my first bike with disc brakes. On the few practice rides I managed before the holiday, I found the front very powerful and that the back locked the wheel very easily. I developed a very cautious approach to riding down hills off-road, using the back brake gently all the time and feathering the front brake to reduce the chance of it locking. Scary at times on steep hills, but overall it worked.
- 3) The bike came with 38mm Schwalbe G-One tyres with a bobble pattern tread. These gave a comfortable ride on road, although I suspect that their grip limit on-road was lower than with the standard Schwalbe tread pattern, and they were OK on firm off road sections. On soft soil and sand the grip didn't seem as good as that of my companions' bikes. Theirs had much wider tyres - the narrowest of which being 43mm.
- 4) The sticky clay soil south of Cambridge highlighted the issue of mudguard clearance. Leaves, sticks, and mud kept clogging things up, even with the mudguard adjusted as high as possible. Bar one, the others all had the larger high-level or frame-mounted off-road style mudguards. Less good on rainy roads, but with at least 50mm of clearance. The Elan can take 40mm tyres with standard mudguards, and 50mm without, so larger ones would be a better option. I suspect that off-road style mudguards could be fitted somehow, perhaps strap-on. I also spotted that the rear mudguard was attached at the top with a socket cap (Allen) screw which seemed

designed to help the mud coalesce there. I have since replaced it with a dome-topped screw to reduce this effect.

All in all an enjoyable, if exhausting, week and a good learning experience.

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Long Distance Riding **By Toby Robins**

I'm an everyday, utility cyclist. Generally, I ride to the shops, the station and to meetings. My bike is for getting from here to there and back again.

But once a year I do a "big ride". These are long distance, one-way trips that begin from my home in Suffolk and end several hundred miles away. I might stay with family or friends and sometimes camp, but occasionally I'll find a hotel or pub.

Over several days, I enjoy the chance to travel slowly through changing landscapes, see unvisited places and, perhaps most importantly, I relish the solitude of the saddle.



I don't have a funky road bike or wear Lycra. For these trips I ride a 3 speed with North Road handlebars, a leather saddle and wear shorts and tee shirts. This is simple, stripped-back traveling, uncomplicated by trendy gear or accessories.

These rides are largely self-supported. I carry tools, spares and, very often, too little food and water. I regularly underestimate the energy and determination these adventures demand.

Last summer, my big ride was from Ness Point in Lowestoft to St Davids in Pembrokeshire. Over 4 days I made the 440 mile journey from England's most easterly point to the most westerly in Wales.

I left the Lowestoft lifeboat station at breakfast time on a Tuesday in July and completed the journey to St Davids lifeboat station by the Friday evening. Covering well over 100 miles every day, my waypoints were at Cambridge, Evesham and Llandovery.

If any linear journey in the British Isles reveals the rich variety of our landscapes, it must be this one.

Starting out across the flatlands of East Anglia, gently rising and falling through the pastoral towns and villages of the Midlands, climbing up into the Black Mountains before descending across the corrugated valleys towards the tiny city of St Davids and, finally, the Irish Sea.

The highs and lows of the landscape neatly mirror the emotional highs and lows of any long cycle journey. When traveling,



we very often only focus on the departure and arrival points. When cycling, there's time to discover what lies between; both geographically and within our own abilities.

Long distance bicycle journeys are a mixture of discovery, endurance, achievement and harsh self-doubt.

While there is an overarching goal, the reality consists of many more, smaller victories and set-backs. The joy of free-wheeling beneath a Tawny Owl along an avenue of trees at dusk, is soon forgotten during the spirit-crushing battle of riding through torrential and unrelenting rain.

In the moment, nothing matters other than reaching the next summit, but this triumph only builds towards the outward tears and inward elation as the final destination comes into view.

These are the things that make every moment of long-distance riding worth while.

While solo-riding may seem a solitary pursuit, the high points often include others. Last year, I shared tea from a farmer's Thermos, was offered shelter and tools to repair yet another puncture and cycled along with a newly-widowed man, tears driven across his cheeks as he ventured out alone on his bike for the first time since the death of his wife of 54 years.

Although these encounters are short, each one is special and adds richness and human colour to the adventure that wouldn't be there if I wasn't on my own journey.

Ultimately, long-distance riding combines the child-like simplicity of riding a bike at a pace that allows time to think and be. In so many ways, the destination is less important than

each hill climb, pothole and lunch stop as these moments happen during the ride rather than at the end of it.

Traveling slowly somehow seems rebellious and counter-cultural within the immediacy and target-driven nature of our society.

This summer, I will be cycling to North Yorkshire, through the Lincolnshire wolds and across the Humber Bridge. Although I'll plan the route, the real story will unfold along the way and include people and places I don't yet know.

And that's why my big rides are important to me; they're big adventures made up of so many smaller treasures.



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