

Hallo everybody

Here we are with another addition of Winged Wheel which I hope you will enjoy. My grateful thanks go to everyone who has submitted articles but I do have to say that I am a bit disappointed not to have received a few more about the holidays that I am sure you all had. I include my own account of our holiday in Denmark later in this issue. It hasn't been a bad Summer after a bit of a slow start has it? If you would like to send something for a future issue, please let me have it at any time as it's always good to know that I have something ready to go! Let's hope that the Autumn weather is kind to us as that always makes the Winter seem shorter, I think. Happy cycling



Judy

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President's Ramblings

How quickly the last three months have passed, and I haven't done as much cycling as I intended. Before I start reminiscing there are a couple of admin issue I need to convey. Firstly, it has been some time since the club offered charitable support to cycling related endeavours, so I am asking for suggestions from the readers of "Winged Wheel". I am mindful that those who live in the "Ipswich and surrounds" area have suggested worthy causes in the past, but it would be nice to spread our support further afield, so if you know of any charity with a cycling connection, looking for help, please get in touch.



Secondly, I would draw your attention to the article about club trophies, written by our editor Judy.

Its time now to start planning those cycling holidays for next year, and I know some have already started. Remembering with fondness some of the cycling holidays with like minded club members, my mind wonders to the Inn valley trip, the canal de-midi, Holland, Denmark

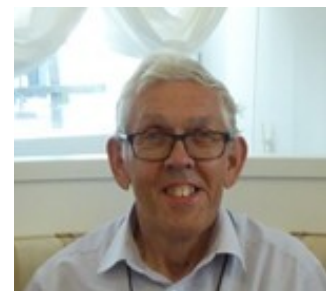
and other wonderful holiday adventures. These trips were of course moving on cycle tours, contrasting with the CTC Birthday ride events and others, which had a single base from which day rides could be enjoyed. It is such a shame the pandemic put an end to CTC Holidays and tours causing the demise of the Birthday rides. I enjoyed being part of/ participating in several of these events, and still have the route sheets and GPx files for the rides, for a number of them. I could of course visit the area and re-ride some of the routes or ride those I hadn't ridden when there. Then it occurred to me that perhaps our group (CTC Suffolk) might hold its own stripped-down version "Birthday Rides". Initially these would be based on some of the previous holidays and tours, locations, but later we could develop our own destinations and routes. Finding accommodation should be easier with the reduced numbers that would be involved. These events would be without the evening entertainment laid on, but lower numbers would mean we could organise things in advance, nearer the time, or on an impromptu basis when there. The Birthday rides were a week long event, but it might be possible to have shorter trips, say two or three days. One of the issues for the Birthday rides organisers was finding big enough venues to provide the package. If we ran our own smaller version of Birthday rides, I believe it would enable us to visit places/areas precluded in the past, by CTC holidays and tours, for the lack of a suitable venue. A group of 8 or 10 would probably be about the maximum for such an adventure, but I have also been thinking perhaps "Awaydays" could be extended. I am considering the idea of driving somewhere Friday night, riding Saturday and Sunday am and heading for home after. That said those of us who are retired could do this midweek when perhaps accommodation might be cheaper.

Of course, all this pre-supposes you have nothing else to do or other commitment! Happy Cycling --- Maurie.

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Sunday Rides Ramblings

I have been re-reading my piece in the last Winged Wheel and I find that subsequent events have contradicted my earlier comments about Rides Types. During the covid restrictions with limitations on rides the Sunday Rides Committee felt that, in the circumstances, it would be simpler to just have two types of ride – Easy and Medium paced rides. It has become evident that the difference in pace between the two rides has widened since then. A few regular riders have pointed out that we no longer have any "middle of the road" rides.



This was discussed at a recent meeting of the Sunday Rides Committee when it was decided to revert to the pre-covid ride types, with some updating. From October onwards the previous E (Easy) Rides will be replaced with LP (Leisurely Paced) Rides and the previous M (Medium) Rides will be classified as MP (Medium Plus) Rides for the faster paced riders. We have reintroduced the MT (Medium Touring) Rides for members looking for a slightly faster ride over longer distances than the LP Rides. We do not regularly have the numbers to support three rides each week so an MT Ride will be included on the Rides List once a month, on a trial basis, to gauge the level of support.

When compiling attendance statistics I have noticed there has been a steady fall in numbers on our Sunday club rides which is obviously concerning. At the last count there are nearly 1000 Cycling UK members in Suffolk who are, by extension, entitled to take part in CTC Suffolk group rides but, in an average year, only about 70 members have joined our rides. I know there are any number of reasons why members do not take part in our rides, geographical location obviously the main one, but it would be useful to get some feedback from members. I would welcome any constructive criticism or suggestions that would help make our rides more appealing to a wider, particularly younger, audience. We cannot address the problem of falling attendances, if indeed there is a problem, without some idea of the reasons.

Happy cycling and keep the wheels turning.

Michael Scott

Sunday Rides Coordinator

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CTC Suffolk Trophies

At the last committee meeting for CTC Suffolk we discussed the trophies which, for many years have been awarded to the winners of the Sunday and Thursday attendance. It was agreed that we should stop doing this, partly as we are really not a competitive type organisation and partly as the trophies are now, mostly, quite old, scruffy and have no space for more inscriptions. It was felt that, instead, certificates could be awarded to the attendance winners at the AGM. We no longer have the annual lunch and prize presentation at which they were presented. Times change! It was agreed that we should keep the 'Club Personality of the Year' trophy which goes to a member who has done something outstanding for the club and this is voted for and awarded at the AGM. It was felt that the trophies should be donated to the Ipswich Transport Museum. If anyone has any strong feeling about this, please speak to a member of the committee about it.

Another Cycling Adventure (or seeing without seeing)

Cycling has been a very big part of my life from paper rounds, work miles, touring, racing and cycling with CTC Suffolk for over 60 years. I eventually had to admit that my failing eyesight meant that I could no longer safely ride solo along the Suffolk lanes I loved and this meant a change of focus.

However I now have a new life as a “stoker” on a tandem. Over the last 10 years I have taken the rear seat on various tandems with a motley crew of steersmen and a woman. Over the past two years Dave Copland has kindly climbed aboard my machine and I have experienced a different type of riding. Once every two or three weeks we set out from my house into the lanes around Hadleigh, Dave cycling into Hadleigh from Ipswich and swapping to the tandem for about a 25 mile round trip for coffee and cake at one of the many local establishments. When Dave arrives I disclose the cafe destination and off we go, sometimes accompanied by my brother in law Brian. It is amazing to me that I have planned the route in my mind’s eye without the use of a map, to and from the cafe although occasionally we have a hiccup.

A strange thing about riding with limited sight is that my brain seems to have retained the various routes and I can often “see” the next junction clearly, although this often causes amusement for Dave when I reduce the distance between junctions in my brain map. I will call out “next right at the white cottage” for example, only for Dave to be looking for the cottage which is still half a mile or more ahead.

Having travelled the Suffolk lanes so many times for over 72 years since my first trip on my “Lenton Sports” exploring the lanes around Felixstowe, my brain has a large archive to use for this new way of travelling. With the air on my face and hopefully the sun on my knees, other partially sighted riders have shown me that cycling can still be enjoyable. There are exciting moments when there is a sharp right or an “S” bend that I have forgotten about, and the speed downhill can be exhilarating and it makes you glad you have a reliable steersman.

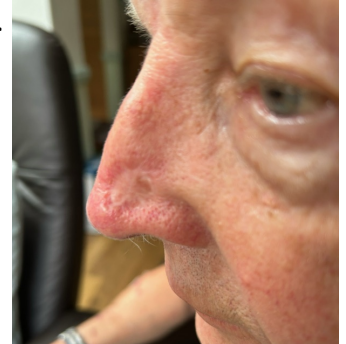
If you see us in the lanes give us a wave and Dave will tell me who it is.

Ken Nichols

It will never happen to me

by Ray Wand

Please excuse the gross close up of my nose but you will notice the skin graft. Necessary because I was diagnosed with a benign melanoma a couple of years ago. Unfortunately not the best of matches as the graft came from my chest but I refuse to use male make up to achieve a perfect match! The primary cause was exposure to the sun and my neglect to protect my conk. Where did my nose get a significant part of the exposure? On my bike without taking suitable protection of a barrier to the fiercer sun's rays we are now experiencing.



By the way, this can happen to any skin tone. Don't take my word for it but get the message from the Dermatologists at Ipswich hospital.

So clear words of advice from the same source. Slap on the factor fifty on any exposed skin when you go out especially when cycling. Hopefully this will improve your chances of this not happening to you in later life.

Please slap it on and don't learn the hard way like I did!

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On a slightly happier note, Nicola Halton sent in this delightful picture. By the way, do we all love potholes?!



Autumn Cycling by Paul Fenton

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven”

(Ecclesiastes 3-1”)The whole countryside and our spirits are saying ‘time to relax’. The clamour and energy of Spring and Summer is waning now. We look back more than forward., reflect more than plan. The land and our bodies tell us ‘prepare for recuperation’. Every season has it’s time. Autumn is the season of ‘*mists and mellow fruitfulness*’ (John Keats). Harvests have been gathered and the fields are brown. Hedgerow berries are



full, and seed heads brittle. Gulls follow the plough, and earthy aromas drift from the freshly turned soil. Village allotment shows boast the largess of supreme leeks, polished veg and enormous marrows. Church alters give praise and thanks to our abundant harvests at Festival time. The glistening golden crusted loaf is the centre-piece yet again.



Us cyclists reflect on the years rides and adventures and give thanks for friendships, joys, adventures and revelations. We turn more to our local lanes. Shorts give way to full leggings, sleeves or arm-warmers become the norm. Our whole approach becomes more relaxed, destinations a little closer, rides a little shorter. But all is not downward looking. Spirits are lifted as sun burns through early mists,

and there is always a short spell of ‘Indian Summer’ most years. Log fires provide welcome sources of warmth as we rediscover the joys of village pub interiors. Fogs, fewer it seems these days, enclose us in a mysterious land. Droplets of condensation form on our bikes and ourselves and for those with spectacles an added hazard. The fog traveller becomes an adventurer – the way less certain. Our bearings become a little vague and confused.

Buildings and trees defined by the shadowy outlines loom up at us as we glide by and pass into the thickness behind. We press on into a dreamy world.

Skies – the other half of our ‘landscape’ provide us with late drama. Often the morning air is crystal clear after a storm – we can see for miles! Cumulus clouds tower and billow with often pearlescent colour. We see more sunsets as we near the Autumn equinox. The harvest dusts giving us a last hurrah as we pedal home. Often the last few miles require lights and once again we share the joys of a little night riding, when riding down that disc of light on the road has its own magic and we share in a special sense of freedom: To quote Ronald Blythe, (‘Next to Nature’) *“How can anyone own anything at night”*.

The dedicated among us check over and clean up and service our best machines prior to the winter lay-up, and prepare the ‘winter iron’ for another season of rough treatment. For the lanes so welcoming and bucolic from May to August become veins of mud and holes as winter traffic and agriculture bashes them into submission. Undeterred we soldier on! For *“are we human, or are we dancers”* – (The Killers – ‘Human’)

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A weekend in your backyards

By John Thompson

I thought hard about whether there is any point in offering an article on my weekend riding in south Suffolk.

For many of you, it’s your regular riding area. Some of you live there and I don’t mean just because Ipswich is in south Suffolk. However, it’s not a local ride for me so I always enjoy riding there when I can and, you never know, I just might make you aware of some lanes you haven’t ridden yet. Also, while I don’t include CUK Suffolk members, I think many Suffolk residents overlook or haven’t even become aware of what we have so close to home, so it’s a point of principle too!

All that explains why I was prepared to pay for two nights in a Travelodge for an event (Tour de Stour 100 km Audax) just approx. 55 miles away and for the most part a straightforward drive along the A12. Also riding to and from the event would help me get my distance riding fitness back, which, as I’ve explained before, took a hammering because of the pandemic. With that in mind, I did consider riding home but I decided the better option was to spend time riding ‘first time’ lanes and catching the train home.

Friday 5 April: Ipswich station to Capel St Mary Travelodge – 8.89 miles.

I caught the train to ensure I had ‘full legs’ for Saturday. I don’t need to tell you that from Ipswich station, I had heavy traffic to contend with getting out of town. I came to realise I could have avoided some of it because I need not have followed the one-way system that brings you back on yourself to get to the A137. I could have got off at the bottom of Burrell

Road (I think that's correct but you probably know where I mean) and walked across. The heavy traffic, of course, continued through Wherstead and up the quite steep hill (with loaded panniers) to the roundabout that junctions with the A14 and A12 slip-roads. Once past the roundabout the traffic volume wasn't so bad but it was still quite busy. However, I wasn't on the A137 for long. I turned right onto the unsigned lane that takes you to Bentley. It is a designated quiet lane and a lovely wooded one and is so right through to the junction with the old A12, just north of Capel St Mary. From there, I followed the old road into Capel St Mary and then to the Travelodge. I had a light bite in the Costa before checking in

In the evening, I had an excellent cyclist-size meal in the Cappadocia Turkish restaurant. They also have some good beers, albeit bottled.

Saturday 6 April: Tour de Stour Audax, plus Capel St Mary Travelodge to Dedham primary school and return – 82.33 miles. I left the Travelodge around 7.00 am. That early it was a bit cool but the sun was out indicating it would be warm later, which it was. At this time of writing, it seems appropriate to say, "remember those days?!"

I have done the ride from Capel St Mary to Dedham before and it's lovely, along some narrow wooded lanes and including East Bergholt and a stretch of South Suffolk Cycle Route B. It also includes a number of short but steep hills and one not so short. That is the 10% Cox's Hill on the A137, just south of Manningtree. I think this is one of the areas where many cyclists discover Suffolk isn't as flat as assumed, even if they're from hillier parts of the country. I have heard expressions of surprise from cyclists from hillier parts. What is perhaps even more surprising about Cox's Hill is that it's on a main road.



The Tour de Stour 100 km Audax (organised by Ian Lovelock of CC Sudbury) is actually 106 km. I can best detail the route by stating where the controls are: Lamarsh, Borley, Long Melford, Stradishall Clare and Boxford. I completed it in around 6 hours 50 minutes, which I was happy with.

After plentiful tea and cake provided by Ian and his helpers, I took some photos around Dedham and then started back to the Travelodge. It involved a steep climb, with quite tired legs, about 1 mile out of Dedham. The good news was that in the return direction, Cox's Hill was a descent.

In the evening, I had another good cyclist-sized meal in the Cappadocia restaurant and more good beer.

Just to clarify that lovely as Dedham is, as most, possibly all, of you are familiar with it I'm not including it for a photo in this article. I'm opting for photos that just might show spots you haven't seen.

Sunday 7 April: South Suffolk Circuit (33.83)

Sunday was an even sunnier and warmer day – yes really! However, there was a strong wind, which was against me for at least half the distance. That said, considering the short total distance, it wasn't a challenge. Nevertheless, it was ironic that if I had opted to ride all the way home, without any detouring into south Suffolk, I would have had a strong tail or side-tail wind probably all the way home.

Firstly, I passed through Little and Great Wenham, passing the Queens Head pub and memories of the Christmas lunches (what a shame they've stopped doing them!), and then to Raydon. From there I joined, Suffolk Cycle Route B to Lower Raydon and then followed some lovely and quite hilly lanes, including a stretch following the River Stour, to picturesque



Shelley. Then it was through Layham to Hadleigh Heath, for a busy stretch along the A1071 to turn right along a lane to Kersey Tye and Kersey. I spent some time in Kersey taking photos and watching several riders safely ride through the ford, although I walked it.

Again, lovely as Kersey is, as most, probably all of you are familiar with it, I'm not including a photo of it.

From Kersey I rode through Lindsell and Lindsey Tye to Semer. Now, to cut a long story short, I then got thoroughly confused. There might have been some bad map reading on my part, although I'm unconvinced, but there was a lack of signposts. It was probably mainly because I was using the AA 3 miles to 1 inch map of East Anglia. I resolved to purchase the appropriate Landranger maps, which I now have. Anyway, I lost a lot of time going round in circles coming back to where I started, more than once. I ended up in Chelsworth. Picturesque as it is, it wasn't on my original intended route. To get back on it would have been time-consuming so I resolved to just ride to Bildeston along the B1115 -at least it's a descent in that direction.

My plan was to enjoy nostalgia by spending a few moments looking at the former Naughton Mill youth hostel building. The more usual route from Bildeston would be to follow the B1078 to Nedging Tye and then turn right. However, to ride a lane for the first time, I turned right in Bildeston, continuing along the B1115 to turn left just south-east of the village along the lane through Nedging that goes past the former hostel to junction with the B1078, where you would turn right on the more direct route. It was ironic that for all the times I stayed at the hostel, I had never ridden to it from that direction. The lane involves quite a long hill.

From Lowestoft the hostel was around a 50-mile ride and I got more Naughton Mill stamps on my hostel membership cards than I did for any other hostel. However, as it was only 10 miles from Ipswich, I guess probably none, almost certainly most, of you had no cause to use it. On that assumption, I'm including a photo of it. It closed as a hostel in 1983, at the time of the 'YHA closure purge.' I guess we all have our opinions as to whether it was a right or wrong thing to do. It's now a private residence and was the subject of an East Anglian Daily Times feature (<https://www.eadt.co.uk/lifestyle/21660661.naughton-mill---former-mill-far-reaching-open-farmland-views/>).

I spent a few minutes recalling old times and taking photos, before making for Ipswich. That involved passing the Wheelhouse pub in Naughton, which also brought back memories, being where we always made for after hostel supper. Even the lanes over those final few miles through Elmsett before hitting the streets in Sproughton were new to me.

Not a big day's mileage but a lot packed into it, including a lot of 'first time' lanes. A rewarding day and weekend based just approx. 55 miles from home.

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Wolsey Road Club

Hi Everyone, just a very short update on the club this time. We've had a busy summer out on regular club rides enjoying the sun. We've had a lovely Indian Summer well into September. As I write this, David Coupe has just hosted the Debenham Audax, the weather was gorgeous with a lovely warm day and little wind. I hope everyone enjoyed it? I know a few of our cycling UK/WRC members rode or volunteered for the event.

The one thing the WRC have had to report on was our Date Fixing meeting earlier this month. We agreed to organise/host an Open Time Trial, 4 weeks of evening time trials and the Reliability Ride again. We will, of course, again be extending a welcome to all on the day to elevenses at Bredfield Village Hall in February. I believe this year's trial went well so we hope you will accept our invitation? We will confirm the date. Karen Eaton

Our Danish Adventure



In June, this year, we took our bikes, in the car and travelled on the Harwich to the Hook of Holland night ferry. This was great as the first night's accommodation was sorted and we arrived in the morning ready for our drive to Denmark, feeling that our holiday had started already. We took our time to drive through Holland and spent our first night in Ovelgonne, Germany. The next morning we drove on to the border and arrived at our first Danish hotel in Ribe, in pouring rain (thankfully it didn't last) We spent the first day exploring Ribe and the next day we had our first cycling day which was great. We found our way out of Ribe on the amazing cycle route and continued along the coast towards Romo Island but somehow managed to miss a turning

and had ridden about 6 miles before realising but, in true cyclist style, we found a lovely cafe and after some refreshment, we retraced our route and cycled across the causeway to the island enjoying the beautiful scenery. It was a great day and apart from a few unmade stretches of path we can really recommend Denmark for cycling. Apparently Denmark has the highest number of bikes per person than any country in the world.



The next day, we opted for a shorter ride and went to visit the Wadden Sea Visitor Centre which is in a huge modern building and has beautiful displays including the world's largest oyster shell. The view looking over the marshes was amazing too. Then we cycled along some delightful quiet lanes through small villages with lovely white churches. The ride back was a bit tough with a head wind but, another good day. The next day we packed up and drove along past Ringkøbing Fjord where everything is so clean, crisp and well cared for. Our next hotel was at Thisted with views over Limfjord. Next day, we cycled again taking a circular route

including a ferry across Feggesunde to the island of Mors. The route was quite undulating (I thought Denmark was flat!) with beautiful scenery and wild flowers and we came back



across a huge bridge. A couple of days later we cycled again towards the coast through Thy National Park to Stenbjerg where there were some very interesting little fishing boats. It was all so enjoyable that, perhaps we went a bit further than intended and had yet another head wind for

the end of our ride, but it couldn't spoil another wonderful day. Our next accommodation was our favourite of the holiday. It was a perfect self catering place at Gjern, so peaceful and relaxing in a recently

converted barn with all mod cons. The next morning saw us cycling along a disused railway track which had been made into a cycle route. It was so enjoyable that I thought "why would anyone want to do anything else?" Then we rode to Silkeborg, another lovely town, and along by the lake. The next day we visited Den Gamle By, a living museum in Aarhus, about 20 miles from where we were staying. It was so interesting with displays for different eras and people dressed in clothing from the time. Quite apart from the historical interest, it was a delightful place to be. Our next hotel was in Kerteminde, a lovely town overlooking the fjord and one of the highlights was a visit to the Johannes Larsen museum, who I had never heard of, but we immediately fell in love with his style of painting and his wonderful house. The next day we cycled to visit the Vikingmuset at Ladby where there was a burial ship. I loved it all as it was so well explained and easy to follow. Then it was on to Misenge where we had lunch and rather a large bottle of cider in a lovely garden before stopping again to photograph a lovely windmill.



It's amazing where the time goes to and before we knew it, we were driving to our last destination in Denmark just outside Copenhagen. We cycled to visit the beautiful capital city along the delightful cycle path and went to see the little mermaid statue and the other wonderful things that I am sure you have all heard about. We also drove to visit Kronborg Slot in Helsingor, where Shakespeare based Hamlet. There was even an actor doing some scenes from Hamlet.

All in all, it was a truly wonderful holiday with a good mix of cycling, sight seeing and relaxing.

Judy Scott

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Hadleigh

East Sussex – part 2

By John Thompson

In my account of my trip to East Sussex over Easter 2023, I explained I made a spur of the moment decision to visit a reservoir rather than climb Ditchling Beacon. I also explained I resolved to return to do what I originally intended

Thus on Thursday 20th June I again travelled by rail to Polegate, where I was again booked into the Premier Inn for 4 nights.

Friday 21st June; Polegate – Ditchling Beacon and return (69.37 miles)

I hit it lucky with the weather yet again! After all that long horrible wet weather we had been having this summer, today was sunny and warm and it was predominantly so for the whole long weekend. It seems the theory the sun shines on the righteous is now proved beyond all reasonable doubt! Digressing, I had been intending commenting “remember them?” meaning sunny days. However, I’m writing this the day after the hottest day of the year so far so, just maybe, we are now going to get a reasonable period of proper summer

As usual from Polegate, I started by following the Cuckoo Trail to Hailsham. From there, I followed the A271 for a short way to Magnum Down, from where I turned onto a lovely wooded lane and a succession of more lovely lanes via the village of Golden Cross to arrive at Ringmer nicely at lunchtime. I made use of the village store and a seat in the recreation ground for a sandwich and bits and pieces lunch.

From Ringmer, things went pear-shaped for a while – yes, bad navigation. I spent a long time stressing over the map and getting thoroughly confused trying to follow lanes between the B2197 and the A26. Eventually, out of desperation, I disturbed a lady gardening. She put me right but it meant going back to Ringmer. However, I now realised what my mistake had been so got back on-route following lanes via Barcombe to Plumpton, from where I followed the B2126 to Ditchling. It was then that the nerves started at the sign for the



Beacon! It starts gently enough but gets steeper. Googling indicates differing opinions on it’s average gradient ranging from 4.9% to 6.2% and even 9.4%. It’s steepest section is stated as 15%. All I can say is that although it’s less than 1¼ miles, it’s tough enough!

I lingered for a while at the top taking in and photographing the views. I noticed people were exiting the car park with ice creams. I took a look and, yes, there was an ice cream van. My large 99 tasted so good after climbing on a warm day! It was like being the age again if the 0 was taken off my actual age at the time (I’ve since had a birthday).

Ideally, I would have continued from the top to Brighton but time was against me. I wonder if the different opinions about the average gradient are because some have measured from Ditchling, whereas other have measured from Brighton. Whatever, I descended back to

Ditchling – strange how it was so much quicker! I followed a more direct route back to Ringmer and then via Lower Dicker to Polegate.

Now it's back to my favourite theme of relaxing in the evening over good food and beer reflecting on the satisfaction of another objective realised.

Saturday 22nd June: Polegate to Heathfield via the Cuckoo Trail and returning on-road (28.01 miles)

This day's objective was to ride the part of The Cuckoo Trail I hadn't done, between Hailsham and Heathfield, which is the furthest it is currently accessible. I also had a 'big' plan to visit a reservoir. More on that to come.

It was still warm but there were ominous clouds. Yet again, I started by following the Trail to Hailsham. The day before I passed where the trail continues from Hailsham to Heathfield so I didn't have to frap around finding it. It wasn't long before the clouds did their business with a heavy shower so I put my 'old-fashioned' cape on but was also able to shelter under tress. It didn't last long. Yet again the rail geek in me enjoyed seeing that all the former stations are still standing, albeit some more derelict than others. Some of them have been well preserved.

n-route to Heathfield, the Trail passes through Horam, where suddenly everything temporarily stops and it's necessary to go on-road. However, the signposts also stop so if you don't know the way it's pure guess work. My geographical instincts, for what they are worth, made me follow some residential roads. I approached some chaps standing chatting and one of them indicated to me to turn around. He had guessed I wanted the Cuckoo Trail so I guess it's a common occurrence for cyclists to come along that toad looking for it. The problem was that despite me telling him I wanted to go to Heathfield he was just directing me back to where I had come from. I decided the best option was to head for the town centre and use my nose to try to re-find the trail. I didn't do badly in that I found a café called "Cuckoo café," suggesting I was near it. There was also a big group of cyclists on a club ride there. However, while not meaning it derogatorily, as they were on stripped down bikes (possibly carbon fibre) and no mudguards, I felt the better option for where I wanted directions was the lone tourist dressed cyclist with a tourist bike, including panniers. He pointed me in the general right direction but he wasn't too sure; "I think you'll find a turning on the left," or words to that effect. However, I had passed the former station. It made sense the trail would re-start from there and so I descended to it to check. In any case, I was interested to have a close look at the station, which is especially well preserved. Looking northwards, the tarmacked former trackbed suggest it was the continuation of the Trail. I was 'rude enough' to interrupt a lady jogger who confirmed it.

Now, concerning my original plan to visit a reservoir and a water park. Because of the time lost frapping around and not being sure there wouldn't be more of it, I became concerned there could be a time factor so resolved to give up on the idea (I prefer that to saying I talked myself out of it!). However, it meant I had time to kill so I decided to try the Cuckoo café. I had a mug of tea and my weakness for home made, flaky pastry, sausage rolls tempted me to eat something I had no need for after the stomping breakfast at the Premier Inn and such a short riding distance. The fellow tourist who had directed me was still there so we had a chat. He recommended a café in Heathfield.

I returned to the former station to continue following the Trail. Not being a big rough-stuff fan, this section being tarmacked was the nicest for me. It included seeing the preserved Frenches Halt station, which includes old-school manual level crossing gated and a sign indicating that any person who fails to shut and fasten the gates is liable to a fine not exceeding 40 shillings. That said, despite the tarmac, the section wasn't without it's hurdles. Coming into Heathfield, it was partially blocked by a fallen tree, so I had to dismount and



wriggle round it. A local person (pedestrian) was just behind me and we got into conversation. He confirmed the former Heathfield station is still in situ and advised a tea room is based in it. Of course, I felt obliged to use it and, yes, The Pink Cabbage is very nice, with friendly staff. I had another mug of tea (or was it two?) and a slice of carrot cake, which, like the sausage roll at Horam, I had no need for – oh well!

I admit I followed the busy A267 back to Horham but from there I followed a much quieter road that runs broadly parallel to Hailsham. From there, it was the usual trail stretch back to Polegate.

Saturday 23rd June: Alfriston and return by deviating route – 15.23 miles

On previous trips, I resolved that at some time I would follow the off-road route that leads off from the Cuckoo Trail to Alfriston. That was because it looked like a smooth surface – read on!

It was hardly a big distance but Alfriston is a picturesque village in the South Downs National Park. It also enabled reminiscing about my first cycling tour in 1966. That said, the former youth hostel was not one I ever used, or that I ever used, but if this brings back memories for some of you, that's nice.

I turned off the Cuckoo trail at the junction and initially all was good. At a junction with a road, the lack of signposts prompted me to confirm with a lady cyclist coming the opposite way that it was straight on for Alfriston. She confirmed it was but advised it was very muddy further along. That wasn't what I wanted to hear but I resolved not to wimp out of my objective. A bit further along and while "very" muddy might not have been an understatement, it was also not an exaggeration! It was impossible to ride through and difficult to walk round the narrow edge of it without stepping into it. Keeping a firm hold of the bike and doing my best not to fall over was unnerving. Twice, I had to remove both wheels to clear the mud stuck between the mudguards and tyres. I respect those who enjoy that sort of thing but it's not for me. Eventually (seemed a lifetime!), I came to a junction with another bridleway, turned left and it was okay. I felt obliged to warn two cyclists coming the opposite way about how muddy the other route was. They commented it's not usually like that and we chuckled when I commented that this summer has been different!

It wasn't long then before I was back on-road on a quiet and picturesque lane, and followed further such lanes to Alfriston.

The Singing Kettle tea room is very nice and a bacon roll and pot of teas sufficed. That said, I was surprised and somewhat disappointed that there was nowhere in the village to buy an ice cream on such a nice warm and sunny day. I did spot that the Ye Olde Smugglers Inn had an old-school CTC sign on its wall but I didn't patronise it – yes, I know, shame on me!

My ride back to Polegate was on-road and better than I expected because I opted to be 'adventurous.' Initially, I thought I would simply be taking the route I took in 2023. However, a study of the map made me realise I there was a nice lanes route back through the national park, via Lullington. It was a lovely, picturesque route, albeit involving a steep hill – Chapel Hill (not that there is a chapel there or any sign of there ever having been) It also took me past the "Long Man of Wilmington," one of those mysterious artefacts, crafted into the hillside that often involve debates about UFO's



From the picturesque village of Wilmington, I followed the good cycle path alongside the A26 for the final few miles to Polegate.

Monday morning saw me on the trains home, reflecting on more boxes ticked and in the early stages of the journey, looking out on part of Sunday route back, including seeing the “Long Man.”

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