



No one knows great rides like CTC groups. **Judy Allfrey** of the CTC-affiliated Forty-Plus Cycling Club describes a favourite

Hertfordshire hills



The Forty Plus was founded in 1951 after the CTC member Cecil Cooke wrote to the cycling press proposing a club for middle-aged riders. Lady members would not to be asked their age! Today we are a flourishing CTC-affiliated club offering sociable mid-week rides.

There are 12 active mid-week sections in Bedfordshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Northants, Surrey and Sussex, with Sunday sections in Essex and Kent. Each section has rides once or twice a week, which are listed on www.fortypluscc.co.uk. We publish a quarterly magazine 'Signpost' and members can borrow books, maps and videos with a cycling theme from our library.

Members range in age from 40 to their late 90s and most belong to CTC. Some members are former competitive cyclists or experienced cycle tourists, while others have taken up cycling in retirement. The larger sections can have 25 on the ride and 40 at lunch.

The countryside we ride in varies from the flatlands of parts of Essex to the hills of Kent and Surrey, but all areas have a network of quiet lanes that are perfect for exploration by bike. Members also get together for

cycling holidays in the UK and abroad; one Essex section is twinned with a French club.

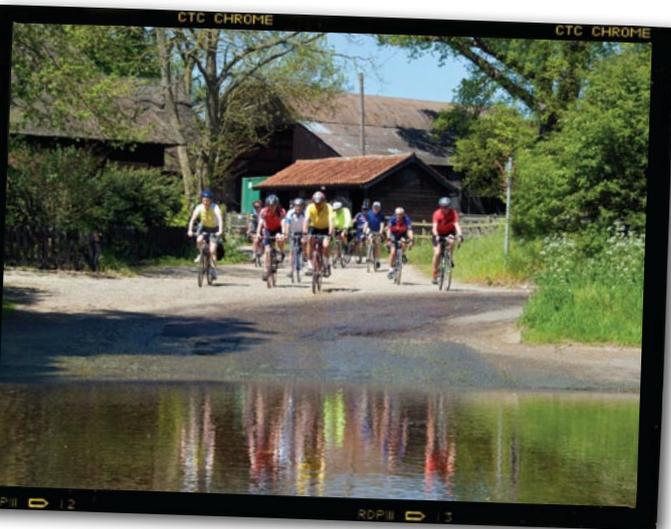
The ride described here is one of our summer events: a circuit of south Hertfordshire that can be ridden in either direction, starting at any point. It is ideal for anyone based in London, or even Sussex, because of the excellent rail links. Other 2008 events included a 100km circuit of Bedford, a 125km ride in Essex and a day out to visit a vintage cycle workshop and Tilbury Fort finishing with a private boat trip from Tilbury to Southend.

The Hertfordshire Hills

The ride takes a circular route through hilly Hertfordshire visiting Cromer windmill and Bernard Shaw's house. There are lots of villages en route, so finding a pub stop for lunch will not be a problem. Wheathampstead is a convenient starting point, only a few miles ride from St Albans or Harpenden station, with a free car park. From here, a clockwise route takes you south through woods and then over the heathland

(Main) Crossing Barwick Ford. Be warned: it can get deep

(Inset) Lots of villages en route means there's plenty of choice for a pub stop



of Nomansland Common. You soon turn north and head through hilly lanes towards Luton airport.

The route descends to Lilley Bottom, climbs again to Preston and then skirts south of Hitchin into Graveley. From here, it's a steep climb, followed by a fine ride through to Cromer, famed for its windmill dating from 1679/81. The restored mill is open at the weekends.

The route then heads south through Haultwick, where the Forty-Plus has an annual reunion of sections, over the A10 and down a narrow lane to Barwick Ford. There are usually llamas on your right, just before the ford. The river can be very fast flowing here so it is best to cross on the footbridge and carry on through Cold Christmas before winding your way west to the B656 where Vanstones Garden Centre (GR TL216200) has a cafe, as well as a lake with ducks and geese.

Approaching the end of the ride, you go past Shaw's Corner where the playwright George Bernard Shaw lived from 1906 until his death in 1950. At the bottom of the garden is a revolving 'writing hut'. Shaw named the hut 'London', so unwanted visitors could be told he was visiting the capital. It's then a short ride back to the start.



Route directions

- **START/FINISH** Wheathampstead roundabout (GR TL178143)
- S through village to mini-RBT where turn L towards Welwyn Garden City
- After 800m, R up Dyke Lane (opp Nelson pub), and at T, L onto B road to X where R.
- Fork R into Down Green Lane, SO through Amwell then 600m to junction with Wheathampstead/Harpenden road, where L and next R into Leasey Bridge Lane and over river Lea to B653 (care).
- Cross B653, through Marshalls Heath, then 1km to T, where L and then SO at X.
- 1st R (Holly Lane) to T, where R to B652. Go L along B652 and 1st R.
- Bear L to Chiltern Green, where fork R; road bears R in 1.5km past airport. After 0.5 km, turn L (SP Wanden End).
- R at T (SP Breachwood Green); L (SP Kings Walden); SO at X through Kings Walden. At next junction L then R; R at T to Preston.
- L at T in Preston by Red Lion; SO to Gosmore, where R at X; SO over B656 (care) to St Ippolytts.
- R at church; L at T to Redcoats where L to Little Wymondley RDB.
- SO at RDB to Great Wymondley, where R, then 1st L and SO under A1(M); R at T (B197), then 1st R into Graveley.
- L at Citroen garage, follow main lane via Chesfield to Weston, where R at X to Halls Green; follow to T.
- At T, go L through Luffenhall, follow road R to T, where R, then 1st L (B1037) to Cromer Windmill where R to Ardeley.
- Bear L through Moor Green and Wood End to Rush Green, where R.
- In Haultwick, bear R and descend to T, where L then R through Levens Green to Old Hall Green, where R by college to T with old A10.
- At T, R then 1st L (over new A10) to T, where R; after 2.5 km L at T (on bend) to Barwick Ford.
- Cross river by footbridge; then R in 1.1 km through Cold Christmas to T with old A10. R to Wadesmill, where L at Anchor pub.
- SO to RBT; SO (care) then 1st R to Chapmore End, where bear R to Stonyhills; L at T then 1st R.
- R at T with A119 then 1st L under railway to Bramfield, where R at T to Bull Green.
- Take 2nd L in Bulls Green (i.e. fork L in front of Horns pub); R at T; L at T on outskirts of Woolmer Green to T with B197.
- R on B197 for 300m; 2nd L (Station Rd); under railway, after 900m, L over A1(M); follow lane then 1st R to Rabley Heath, where R at Robin Hood & Little John pub.
- Follow lane 1.4km to T, where L and in 300m (Nup End) hairpin R; continue 700m to T (B656).
- R on B656; 1st L (SP Crouch Green); SO to T, where L then 1st R to T at Kimpton Mill.
- L then 1st R (Tanyard Lane); at top bear L along track/driveway to Ayot St. Lawrence, where R to village centre and Shaws Corner.
- Keep L (SO) through village to T, where R to B653, where R to Wheathampstead.

FACT FILE

The Hertfordshire Hills

DISTANCE: 100km

TERRAIN: lanes, moderately hilly.

WHEN: any time. Details of the summer 2009 event will be on the St Albans section of the Forty Plus website nearer the time.

MAPS: OS Landranger 166

START/FINISH: Wheathampstead roundabout GR TL178143.

GETTING THERE: Free car park at East Street (GR TL178141) or ride from St Albans/Harpenden railway station (Bedford to Brighton Thameslink route). Other stations close to the route include Hertford, Hitchin, Knebworth, Luton Parkway, Watton at Stone and Welwyn North.

CAFES: Codicote (Vanstones), Graveley (Stevenage Garden Centre).

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