



No one knows great rides like CTC groups. **Max Scott** describes three rides in Northamptonshire, home to the 2009 CTC Birthday Rides

Birthday riding



Oundle in Northamptonshire, 'the county of spires and squires', is the venue for this year's CTC Birthday Rides. What the countryside lacks in mountains and even large hills it more than makes up for in quiet lanes and places to visit. The week (8th-15th August) is being hosted by CTC East Midlands Region, and the three rides described here give just a flavour of what's on offer.

These three rides diverge along the way to take in different distances, and all start and finish at the famous public school. From the memorial in the town centre, the route heads north to Fotheringhay, where Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned in the castle and finally executed. Also Richard III was born here. Now only a grassy mound overlooking the river Nene remains but the church, with its lantern tower, is well worth a few minutes.

Continuing north you come to Wansford, once a staging post on the Great North Road and noteworthy for steam enthusiasts as the home of the Nene Valley Railway. There is a short stretch of A47 to be negotiated before turning northward again on the Hereward Way. Sacrewell Farm Centre, off the A47, has a cafe as well as a working 18th century watermill and shire horse centre.

Just north of Southorpe hamlet the shortest route turns left through Barnack to Stamford, popularly considered to be the finest stone-built town in England. The longer routes bear right through Ufford and into

Lincolnshire, the second of our regional shire counties. The terrain is flat now as you continue alongside Tallington Lakes Leisure Park and through the pretty village of Greatford to Thurlby, where the Youth Hostel has only survived through the intervention of the local councils.

Turning west you return to rolling countryside and enter Rutland, traditionally the smallest county in England. It is worth pausing to have a walk among the Clipsham Yews, an avenue of these trees clipped into all manner of shapes. From here the medium route takes you almost due south into Stamford. The longer route continues west to Wymondham and into Leicestershire. The restored post mill at Wymondham is open to the public and also has an adjacent cafe.

The return leg brings you south towards Oakham and back into Rutland. Past the prison at Ashwell, a left turn takes you to Burley on the Hill. The great house, not to be confused with Burleigh House near Stamford, is not open to the public but there are splendid views across the Vale of Catmose to Oakham

What the Oundle area lacks in hills it makes up for in quiet lanes

The Clipsham Yews (far right) are worth a look en route

Submit a route

If you want to submit one of your local group's favourite rides, write or email the editor - details on page 82 - for advice on how to go about it. Each one printed wins a boxed set of three Cassini historical maps of the area of your choice. To see the whole range, visit www.cassinimaps.com. To order by phone, call 0845 458 9910.



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Route directions

- START/FINISH: Oundle School Sports Centre, Milton Road
- Left from sports centre then L at X-roads Glapthorn Road.
- At George PH turn R on Cotterstock Rd past Perio Mill. R at T to Fotheringhay then L at church through Nassington to Wansford.
- If visiting Nene Valley Railway, R over river bridge on B571 then L over A1 to Wansford Station.
- For main route, SO towards the A1 but turn R on a concrete path (no SP) to cross under A1 and by river to service road (toilets available) & join A47. Sacrewell Farm Centre opp. R on A47 for 1km then L to Southorpe.
- For short route, L through Barnack and L on B1443 into Stamford.
- For the longer routes, R through Ufford where L at T to Bainton. L and imm. R to Tallington.
- R on A16 over level X then L to Barholm. L at T then next R and R again to Greatford. L after PH then R through Braceborough, Wilsthorpe to Thurlby.
- L at T, uphill, L and L again to Manthorpe. Cross A6121 through Witham on the Hill to B176 where R under railway to Little Bytham.
- L past church and continue to Clipsham Yews on R.
- For shorter route bear L before Clipsham village then 1st R by Holywell Hall through Pickwoth to Great Casterton where L on B1081 into Stamford.
- For longer route cont through Clipsham to go under A1 at Stretton.
- SO at B661 roundabout on unclass road and L at T to Thistelton. On to Wymondham, R to the Windmill.
- Retrace then R through Edmondthorpe, Teigh and Ashwell to X-roads by prison where L to Burley. Cross B668 to church and view.
- Retrace and take B668 north to water tower where R to Barnsdale. L on the Avenue to Barnsdale Gardens.
- Take next R for Exton then L at T and follow through village to T, where L and shortly R on NCN Route 63 to Tickencote. Join B1081 into Stamford.
- For all routes leave Stamford on B1081 south. At the southern end of Burghley Park R on Warren Road over A1 to Wothorpe where L on A43.
- R to Easton on the Hill village for the Priest's House or cont. on A43 for approx 3km to Collyweston. L by PH.
- Bear L at A47 for approx 1 km then R to King's Cliffe.
- L by church through Apethorpe to Woodnewton. R at T then R again to Southwick. Bear L up hill skirting Glapthorne and back into Oundle.

FACT FILE

Oundle Birthday Rides taster

DISTANCES: Approx 35, 60 and 75 miles.

MAPS: OS Landrangers 130, 141 and 142.

TERRAIN: Mainly rolling but not very strenuous.

ACCESS: Train stations at either Corby or Peterborough. By road at the junction of A427 and A605 south-west of Peterborough.

ACCOMMODATION: Oundle School and Oundle Rugby Club.

BIRTHDAY RIDES COORDINATOR:

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and beyond from the church nearby. On the approach to Exton, gardening enthusiasts may wish to visit Barnsdale, the original developed by Geoff Hamilton of TV Gardener's World fame.

The remaining part of the long route takes you, like the shorter rides, into Stamford and briefly back into Lincolnshire and then Northamptonshire. At Easton on the Hill a short diversion into the village will reveal one of the few National Trust properties in the county. This is the Priest's House, built around 1500 and the oldest building in the village. The next village Collyweston gave its name to the famous stone tiles which grace the roofs of many older houses in the county.

The last few miles take you through the large village of King's Cliffe to Apethorpe. The next village Woodnewton is notable as the burial place of Coco the Clown, who died in 1974. Unlike the sprawling remains at Apethorpe, Southwick Hall just along the road is a delightful compact manor house with parts dating back to the 14th century. Thence back into Oundle.

Who we are

CTC East Midlands Region remains, with the exception of CTC Scotland and CTC Cymru, as probably the only regional group still functioning and promoting special events. Regular regional meetings are held and attended by the main group secretaries and RtR representatives, who communicate and exchange ideas. One of these was to take on the task of hosting the 2009 Birthday Rides. Other events promoted regularly by the Region include the East Midlands Rally at Beamanor Hall in Leicestershire over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend (details from Ray Clay at ray.j.clay@googlemail.com) and the Forests of the Region audax ride in September.