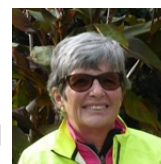


Hello Everybody

Here we are with another edition of Winged Wheel which I hope you enjoy. My grateful thanks to everyone who has sent in articles, especially first timers. Please continue to send in articles as they are always very welcome and don't need to be particularly long or complicated. I am still looking for someone to take over as editor in the near future. There is really no desperate rush until I give up and there is no one there to take over so please give it some thought. It would be good to have someone waiting to take over.



Hasn't it been a wonderful Summer? Well some would say it's been too hot and the countryside and our gardens have suffered but, when it comes to cycling, I always feel that we do manage to create a breeze for ourselves as we pedal along along! One particularly enjoyable ride that we did involved crossing the Boxted bridge where the saga continues and it's still closed to motorists! What an utter waste of money it has been. You will see what I mean from the pictures below!

Happy cycling

Judy

Opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of CTC Suffolk or Cycling UK. The right to edit for reasons of space, clarity and libel is reserved.

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A Note from the Chairman.

First I would like to say thank you to those of you who have had confidence in me taking on the roll of chairman. Secondly to say thanks to Maurie fulfilling the roll of President for a second time.

For my first thoughts as Chairman I want to concentrate on a couple issues that arose at the AGM. The first is the small number of members who are prepared to come forward and help. The committee is made up entirely of members who have a job to do. There is an option for the committee to co-opt additional members. Which would enable the committee to have a broader view at the same time widening the pool of members who are able to help the club. The only proviso is that people must be full members. So if you feel you might be able offer something please speak with a committee member. Also if you know of someone who you think could fulfil a roll let us know.



The second is around the issue of club donations Cycling groups. As a club the majority of our activities are centred around Ipswich and the east of the county. Whereas our membership is drawn from all parts of the county. So if you know of a cycling group that is in need of help please let me, or another committee member know. We are currently looking at how we may be able to help a couple of groups in Halesworth and Ipswich. It also may be that you have an idea about how funds could be used to the benefit of our club. Again all ideas are welcome.

Glen

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Secretary's Notes

After all the hot and dry weather, I for one am pleased to see the rain return and slightly cooler temperatures. Although we have only just reached September, this has been a sad year for CTC Suffolk in that we have lost several long time members: Colin Kindred (at the end of last year), Alison Parish, Anne Scott, and most recently Dave Dodds. Dave was chairman of the Committee when I joined it 14 years ago, and also of course President of the



club. Dave and Anne were regular riders on both Sunday and Thursday rides at one time, and our sympathy goes to Anne and the family.

I have been thinking that I should say something about the WhatsApp group(s). We started the "CTC Suffolk Member Chat" some years ago as a way for club members to exchange information on cycling and related topics, hopefully without causing anyone offence. It has largely succeeded in this as far as I am aware, and now has 71 members. Quite quickly this came to be used by the Thursday riders to exchange information about their rides, and more recently the Rides Coordinator (Dave Wake) has created 2 new groups for this purpose, one open to all Thursday riders, and the other for those who lead the rides. This was needed to avoid urgent information being lost in general traffic on the main "chat" group.

I know that some members have preferred to avoid WhatsApp altogether, but we have found it so useful on Thursday rides that it is now the preferred form of communication. It is much easier to post a quick message on one of the WhatsApp groups than to email up to 100 members with the same information (although we still endeavour to do both where possible). And it enables any late changes to rides to be communicated even after the ride has started – for instance, cancelling a café stop due to the weather.

For those still reluctant to use WhatsApp, it's worth pointing out that you do have some control over the way messages appear. There is no need to be continually interrupted as they can be muted, either altogether or for individual groups. For instance I have muted notifications from the general "Chat" group – which is not to say that I don't read the messages when time allows!

John.

Email : suffolkctc@gmail.com

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A good ride, courtesy of a motorist!

By John Thompson

During my ride on Sunday March 8th, I paused in a south Norfolk lane, between Gt Moulton and Wacton, to eat an energy bar.

A motorist stopped and asked if I was lost. Having assured him I wasn't, we got into a friendly conversation (obviously not a cyclist hater!), him asking me how far I had come etc. When I mentioned I had been to the Angel cafe in Diss, he told me of a "good" cafe at Tibenham airfield. I thanked him and said I would keep it in mind. I kept my word. When

considering my ride for the following Sunday, it struck me I could do a good one based on it, which would include some first-time lanes.

I set off at around 7.45 am. Initially, I followed the A146 (early on a March Sunday morning it was quiet) to Worlingham and then the 'old road' into Beccles.. From Beccles, I took the B1062 to Bungay, which, as I previously explained, was known colloquially as 'Bungay hills' in the Lowestoft Wheelers' hey-days. They are a total of 6 and are challenging hills for east Suffolk. The most challenging direction is probably easterly, as it involves climbing the steepest hill, the Watch House out of Bungay. This morning, I descended it. In my younger years, I thought nothing of them. Nowadays, I approach them lethargically. I always feel a temptation to wimp out by taking the alternative flat lanes route through Geldeston. So far I've resisted it, and on this occasion I was especially pleased I did. I thought for a 72-year old, I was tackling them well, so felt good about myself. Maybe, I now won't feel lethargic about them.

From Bungay, I continued on the B1062, through Flixton, to turn left onto the old A143, through Wortwell, to Redenhall, just east of Harleston, from where I took the lane to Starston. It includes a short stretch of shared pedestrian/cycle path, which used to be the road. My guess is Norfolk County Council wanted to stop motor vehicles using such a narrow lane, possibly as a result of concerns from locals.. From Starston, I followed the B1134, through Pulham St Mary and Pulham Market, which for 50 years was the venue for the Norwich Cycling Association's annual carol service. Sadly, it abruptly stopped after the 'golden anniversary' year. My understanding is the local community felt they could no longer accommodate it, although I've never ascertained why. For most years, the service was in the afternoon, followed by refreshments in the village hall, provided by the local ladies. However, for about the final 3 years, it was in the morning, followed by mince pies in the church. That was because attendance was waning as many didn't want to ride home in the dark, and, for the same reason, many came by car (they don't make them like they used to!). Whether that contributed to the demise, I don't know. There was an attempt to continue an annual service, at Scoulton, but sadly it was poorly supported.

Back to the ride, I continued along the B1134 to The Tivetshall's. The lane to Tibenham airfield is shortly after the level crossing for the Norwich – London Great Eastern mainline, and the site of the former Tivetshall station, of which there is no longer any sign (for rail buffs, it was the junction for the Waveney Valley branch that ran between there and Beccles). I'd had a headwind, but it hadn't been especially strong. Nevertheless, I was looking forward to being 'blown' home. It was now that the wind started getting stronger, making me look forward to it even more. Also, it made the last ½-mile, along the lane to the airfield with the tailwind especially enjoyable. Nevertheless, I'd never known ½-mile to seem so far. I started wondering if I had missed the airfield (perhaps it had something to do with thoughts of food!). I hadn't, and turned left onto the muddy, poorly surfaced and pot-holed lane to the airfield and the Cloud 9 cafe.

There is an element of first impressions can be wrong., Being in one of a set of what look like disused industrial buildings, it looks pretty basic, albeit it has obviously been smartened up, Inside however, it's rather posh.. With regard to its name, I don't go so far as to say it made me feel on that, but yes, it passed my test. I had the large breakfast (surprise, surprise!), and it didn't just see me home. It very much kept me going for the rest of the day, just needing a few nibbles in the evening, mainly a packet of crisps at the pub!.

For my ride back, I hadn't quite finished with the head wind. To get to the lane I hadn't ridden before, I firstly retraced to the B1134, and the wind was now very strong. Then it was more headwind for 2 miles along the B1134, to turn right (tailwind now) onto the lane, signposted "Tibenham community centre." From Tibenham, I followed another first-time lane to Aslacton, from where it was familiar lanes through Forncett St Peter to Hapton (another for rail buffs is that it included passing under one of the bridges of the former line that ran from Wymondham, through Ashwellthorpe, to join the Great Eastern mainline at Forncett). From there, it was my well-trodden route via Hempnall, Woodton, Hedenham Broome, Geldeston and Beccles. Yes, it was very much a tailwind all the way, but occasional short stretches of direction change did involve side winds.

A total of 65.35 miles. Albeit a bit shorter than I expected, the combination of a good new cafe discovery and some first-time lanes, made it a satisfying ride.

I didn't get his name, but my thanks to the motorist for his suggestion. I doubt that is something that often happens to cyclists – or am I wrong?

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An Eventful Journey

From the pen of Ken Nichols – Edited by Michael Scott

An epic saga of a group of CTC Suffolk cyclists making their way home from France.

Michael Scott (Leader) Philip Hancock (Super Guide) Judy Scott

Margaret Hancock Anne Dodds David Dodds Maureen Nichols Ken Nichols

5.10 am "Cock a doodle doo!!" A cockerel wakes Ken up. Looks at time. Goes back to sleep zzz.

6.50 am Awake once more. "Ten to seven" mumbles Maureen.

8.30 am Washed, dressed etc. Had hearty breakfast

10.15 am Said goodbye to Avril, then off we go. Philip guides us to Arras. Slight tail wind but very cold. Ken's sunglasses steam up and he finds it hard to catch up.

- 10.58 am** On time for train but spread among carriages to find room for bikes.
- 12 noon** Timetable says to change trains but we get back on same one!
- 12.50 pm** Arrive Dunkerque town. Follow Philip once again towards port but avoiding motorways. (Nightmare Ride No.1)
- 3.15 pm** Finally arrive at port and check in for ferry. Disgruntled after half hour trying to work out the coffee/chocolate machine.
- 4.00 pm** Ferry sails. Calmest part of day. Chatting, eating (great sticky toffee pudding with lashings of custard) and watching other shipping sailing by.
- 5.00 pm** Dock in Dover. Walk off ferry then Nightmare Ride No.2 to Dover Station. Over ramps, through barriers, along bits of cycle routes, over cobbles and through pedestrian area.
- 6.58 pm** Park bikes at station and go for coffee at pub across the road. Very old fashioned but warm! Good coffee, loud music.
- 8.00 pm** Catch train to Ashford and Stratford International. Straight forward trip.
- 8.20 pm** Depart from train and problems begin. "No bikes through Westfield" says security guard so head out onto streets to Stratford Main Line Station.
- Nightmare Ride No.3 but now it's dark – for Ken anyway.
- We make for platform 10 but end up on 10a!! Announcement over tannoy "To cyclists on Platform 10a there is no train stopping at that platform".
- 8.38 pm** We scramble with bikes down and up stairs, down and up lifts and dash for train. Guard has held train for us.
- 8.45 pm** Safe and sound and onward to Ipswich. Guard announces "Sorry for delay in departure due to an abnormal number of cycles loading"
- 9.43 pm** Arrive Ipswich Station and go our separate ways.
- 10.00 pm** The Hancocks by bike. The Dodds by train to Woodbridge (but not before trying to board the wrong train).
- The Scotts by bike. Maureen by bike to the Scotts to pick up the car.
- Ken staying at station accompanied by "Pete the Drunk" who repeatedly told Ken that he was "a good fellow".
- 10.30 pm** Maureen arrives with car to load bikes for drive back to Hadleigh.
- 11.15 pm** Bed! Zonked!

6.15 am next morning “Woof Woof Woof” Gales dogs wake us up. Rude awakening.

Final thought – age is no barrier to madness.

8 of us on the trip with a combined age of 600+ = average age 75 years.

You would think we should know better at our age!

A Welsh End to End

Some years ago I spotted that Sustrans had devised a cycle route from Cardiff Bay to Holyhead as part of the National Cycle Network (NCN). It was termed “Lon Las Cymru”, Route 8. I bought the map but never quite got around to setting off on the ride. Recently Bikexplore put together a seven day ride, following Route 8 so I immediately signed up.

Day 1: Ten of us, plus two leaders met on the morning of 1st August and after introductions set off from the Celtic Ring sculpture at Cardiff Bay. This was a “moving-on” tour ie carrying our luggage with no support vehicle. We followed Route 8 religiously. Sometimes this involved using very rough tracks and heading up steep minor roads, when other, somewhat easier options were available. Sustrans is averse to using the more main roads.



The introduction was gentle, going steadily up into the South Wales valleys using a well established old railway route, The Taff Trail. Through old mining towns such as Pontypridd and passing Aberfan (site of a catastrophic collapse of a colliery spoil tip in 1966, which I do remember).



We stopped at Star Bunkhouse at Bwlch (in the Brecon Beacons), directly opposite The New Inn!

Day 2: Bwlch to Rhayader.

We diverted from the lanes to travel along the Brecon and Monmouth canal, to the edge of Brecon and then went east to avoid an “A” road with “elevenses” at Honey Cafe, Bronllys at something around midday (the terrain

definitely kept the average speed down significantly). We were covering about 50 (welsh) miles each day. A cafe stop at Builth Wells and then along a stretch of stony and lumpy track before stopping at self-catering apartments at Rhayader (a pleasant market town). We stopped here for two nights so the next day luggage was jettisoned.

Day 3: Various options. Some did a loop to Llangurig, involving 1800m of climb in a remote moorland area. One headed to a bike shop in the town for some repairs. I decided to make the most of the Elan Valley and the sunny weather and cycled up the valley, passing the three reservoirs and spending some time at the visitor centre.

Day 4: Rhayader to Machynlleth

We took a well surfaced minor road with farm gates and cattle grids up to Llangurig and then a very steep climb, entering the Hafren forest (an area famous for the Welsh Car Rally). Another late elevenses at the lovely town of Llanidloes before heading up and up into remote areas in the Cambrian mountains. We passed the isolated Star Inn and got to the highest point of the ride. On top was one of the Sustrans Millennium iron signposts. As it was rather breezy we crested the top and sat by the side of the road, admiring the views and celebrating with a snack. After this was a very steep, fast decent, made even more dodgy by the strong side gusts of wind. Hoping the brakes would be adequate we plummeted downwards towards Machynlleth and experienced the only brief (but heavy) downfall of rain. We were soon drying off at the central White Lion Hotel.

Day 5: Machynlleth to Porthmadog

On Route 8 we crossed the Dovey river on a cycling/walking Millenium Bridge and were soon heading up into the hills. Around the Corris area there was evidence of slate mining with some historic slate fencing as we proceeded ever upwards, using gears that are never used in Suffolk. What goes up, must come down, as we plummeted down into Dolgellau for a well-earned break. What followed was the luxury of



another railway path, the Mawddach Trail with distant views of the wooden railway viaduct which we were to cross into Barmouth. A cafe stop at Harlech and then over the Cob (carrying the Ffestiniog railway) on to the Premier Inn, Porthmadog. A splendid evening at The Purple Moose brewery tap, "The Australia".

Day 6: Porthmadog to Beaumaris

A wide sweep on lanes to avoid the A497, pausing at Criccieth on the coast and joining a lengthy old railway path, "Lon Eifon". We stopped off at Pont Du vineyard, Penygroes, with views to the Llyn Peninsula. Traffic free all the way to Caernarfon with some cycling alongside the narrow gauge Welsh Highland railway. Welsh cakes in Caernarfon and then with views of the Menai Strait we crossed the Menai Bridge onto Anglesey, staying two nights at the Liverpool Arms Hotel, Beaumaris.

Day 7: To Holyhead and back to Beaumaris

Luggage abandoned we again set off on a nicely hot day. As we crossed the island, the intended cafe for elevenses was closed and we stumbled across a community cafe at Bethel village hall and were made very welcome.

There were some great views as we crossed a causeway to Holy Island and stopped at a Turnpike cottage (on the old A5), now a cafe. The ultimate destination of Holyhead is a bit of an anticlimax as it is not a notable town, mainly a place for passing through, on the way to Ireland. I returned using the old A5 route as it was one of Thomas Telford's great works, also 200th celebrations were taking place the next day to commemorate the opening of his famous Menai Suspension Bridge.

A celebration for us in the evening after a great tour. Certainly strenuous in parts but passing through glorious welsh scenery, virtually rain free. Well worth the effort.

Derek Worrall

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Judi Hallett, Clerk to Melton Parish Council, sent in the following article. I hasten to say that I assured her that we do not cycle on the river wall.

Melton welcomes cyclists - But not on the river wall!

If you cycle in East Suffolk, you will know the delights cycling around the Wilford Peninsula. Most rides around the Peninsula start with a coffee at one of the many cafes in Woodbridge or Melton and then take in the Wonderful Suffolk countryside.

As Clerk of Melton Parish Council, I write to Welcome you to our village and wish you a happy and safe onward journey. I also write to ask that you **do not** cycle along the river wall, in either Melton or Woodbridge. The river wall path is a "Footpath" only, i.e. not a designated path for cyclists. Having spoken to several cyclists who have been using the river wall, they are usually doing so because it is much safer than the road network. However, the path is no wide enough for both pedestrians and cyclists, and many reports have been received of abusive cyclists who will not slow down for pedestrians.

In the coming months gates will be added to the path, making cycling less attractive, but still allowing access for all pedestrians and those who need to use wheeled chairs.

We hope you understand our stance on this matter. For your information, we have been working with other local authorities to improve cycling facilities in Melton, and we hope a brilliant new path will be installed in the next six months.

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“YOU SIT ON THE SADDLE AND YOU CAN PEDAL BUT CAN’T STEER”

These are the words Phil gave me as I sat on a tandem which was designed for disabled riders.

I was with Maureen and our daughter Gale in the 35 acre Millennium Green in Halesworth at the end of June, having gathered to meet and have a ride with the Bike Active North Suffolk volunteers. They have an organised ride every Tuesday when they can use a selection of accessible bikes, tandems and recumbent to take their less able clients to have a short ride in this beautiful parkland which is part of Sustrans Route 1.

Our reason for being here was that CTC Suffolk is looking to help financially a cycling project and we thought this might be just thing.

Having been given instructions by Phil we were off as a small group with him steering the tandem from the rear, at this point he told me that he had very poor vision as well which was a bit disconcerting. Maureen was on a side by side tandem steered by Steve, Gale on a recumbent and Lucy from Suffolk Community Foundation bringing up the rear on a tricycle.

The route was easy to follow on a well surfaced path which twisted and turned over wooden bridges and through narrow gateways to turn underneath a railway bridge and retrace to the starting area.

What lovely caring people these volunteers are and on such a lovely day it was great to see the next group of riders from Mencap set off on various machines to ride the same route. They have a good selection of suitable machines but are in need of more fully trained volunteers, which has a cost. The training has to be approved to cover First Aid, Health and Safety, bicycle maintenance etc.

We said goodbye to this friendly group and retired for coffee and cake in Halesworth at the “Rose & Rhubarb” cafe. On the return journey Gale declared that she would not be using her SatNav and we would have to use our old brains to guide her home to Hadleigh.

Leaving Halesworth behind we went via Heveningham, Walpole, Sibton, Peasenhall and Badingham before passing Saxtead Mill into Earl Soham, recalling many happy CTC rides along the way. To get back to Hadleigh we had to go through Stonham Aspell and back onto the A140 before heading home.

It is amazing how your mind can recall roads and junctions you have not travelled for 10 years or more. Our daughter was very impressed by how two old codgers knew the bends and turns of these Suffolk roads so well. It was a “Grand Day out” and if anyone living in the

Halesworth area has an hour to spare every so often I am sure they would be made very welcome. They are looking for new volunteers to support fully inclusive cycling in the community. Their website gives details of their activities or we could put you in touch with one of their organisers.

www.bansuffolk.co.uk.

info@bansuffolk.co.uk

Ken and Maureen Nichols

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EAST SUFFOLK THROUGH THE EYES OF A MAP ADDICT

No.2 Unusual House Names

By Michael Scott

I mentioned in my article in the last edition of Winged Wheel that I would be coming up with some more interesting (or boring depending on your point of view!) facts relating to intriguing names I have seen while perusing my trusty OS maps. A few interesting house names caught my eye and caused me to investigate further.

Just off the B1456 towards Shotley, on the south bank of the River Orwell near Woolverstone Marina, you will find Cat House. This is a Gothic Style building dating from the late 18th Century when smuggling was rife. The owner at the time had a favourite cat that died, which he had stuffed and placed in the cottage window visible from the river. If the cat could be seen then the area was clear of Excise Men and the smugglers could unload their cargo safely.



A few house names I came across relate to hunger and poverty from times past. Firstly Hungarian Hall, just off the old A12 through Ufford is a 16th Century brick built farmhouse. According to old maps of the area it was originally called Hungry Hall. It is thought that the name arose because of the poor quality of the surrounding land.

With similar origins is Hungercut Hall, a small medieval hall house situated near the cycle route from the A140 at Beacon Hill through to Creting St Mary. The area was recorded as Hungergutte in the Domesday Book, again referring to the inferior land producing poor crops. The name comes from Old English meaning exactly what it says.



Mockbeggars Hall is an imposing Jacobean mansion from the early 17th Century standing on the hill between the A14 and Papermill Lane near Bramford. This was a name often given to houses with an imposing exterior but would offer no charity to beggars, either because they were vacant and left derelict when the owners moved to London, or beggars were turned away.

I have often noticed a sign on the Middlewood Green to Mendlesham Green road pointing to "Tan Office" and decided it required some investigation. It is a small hamlet in the parish of Mendlesham and the name possibly suggests it was the site of a tannery; in the Middle Ages the word "office" had a much wider meaning than today and indicated any sort of workplace. Historical records suggest that Mendlesham, and particularly the hamlet of Tan Office, had a long history of religious nonconformity. In the mid 16th Century a number of "dissenters" were evicted from their homes and some burnt at the stake. From the mid 17th Century until the 20th Century there was a Quaker Meeting House at Tan Office Farm.

More to come!

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Cycling in the Northwest Highlands. How hard can it be?

By Adrian Fagg

I mostly ride in the gentle Suffolk countryside, so riding in the Scottish Highlands was a big step into the unknown for me.

Having got myself a new knee the previous summer and planning to do plenty of walking this summer, I thought I would grab the opportunity of a week in the Northwest Highlands to make a start on improving my fitness. I booked myself a nice little apartment in Aultbea with a sea view and drove up for a week's walking. But as per the title, I had often wondered how hard it would be to cycle in the area, so I put my trusty gravel bike in the car as well.

I only planned to do the one day, a gentle coastal ride, rather than having to go over any big mountain passes.



Looking at the map, my route barely rises much above sea level, so it shouldn't be too much like hard work. Should it?

A glance at the route profile and there's not much of the line that's horizontal though:



It's at this point that I am wondering why I hadn't made an effort to get fit before coming here.

I set off at 9.00 am with a forecast that promised at least some dry weather. The first section follows the A832 to Gairloch. What will it be like riding on the main road? Driving on these Highland A roads, the traffic is generally quite fast, certainly up to and over the national speed limit at times. And of course, the road is generally two-way without a lot of spare width.

The road ahead at the start:

The initial few yards were downhill but in no time, I was grinding up a steep 60m hill, then a lovely descent followed immediately by a 120m climb. As I eventually crested the top of that I felt that I was detecting a subtle pattern here. It's a sequence of grinding up hills and fast descents. The good news was that after a few miles of this, I realised that my worries about traffic were mostly unfounded. There were a couple of cars that sped past in the other lane at high speed, but generally drivers were very civilised and there were no close passes.



After a few miles, passing the famous Inverewe garden on the way, the road really did flatten at Poolewe.



Now the crossing towards Gairloch goes up to 141m past Loch Tolaidh:



On this section, I passed more than one group of touring bikes, which was quite encouraging. This really does look to be a good area for touring.

After a while I was descending to Gairloch. Rather worryingly, this was very fast, thanks to an 80m descent down a consistently steep (around 12% all the way) hill. I knew I had to come back this way, and this felt like it was going to be very hard work.

I stopped for a coffee at the café Mountain Coffee Co, which served Marley coffee and had a Bob Marley theme. It also had the biggest scones I have ever encountered.

Moving on, I intended to ride in the direction of the lighthouse on the northwest corner of the peninsular, but stopping where the metalled road ended. After a while, the road seemed to not be what I was expecting from the map and I eventually realised that what was marked as a track was now a proper road, if rather narrow. That almost completely flat road on the map didn't exactly conform to reality, which included short sections at around 20%.

The lighthouse at Rubha Reidh:



Heading back. This sort of landscape is typical of the gneiss geology that's the base of everything in this area of the Highlands. Beautiful, but hard work at times.



I headed back to Gairloch:



The complex, bouldery hillside beyond is again typical of the Lewisian Gneiss. It's an ancient rock, being at least two billion years old and it's as tough as rock gets.

I stopped again at the café and fought a hard battle with another supersized scone.

Leaving Gairloch, I was worried about the hill ahead. I made a real effort to pace myself to just over 200W, which I was confident that I could maintain. To my surprise this worked, and I got to the top without any fuss.

Now it was just a return ride to Poolewe, but turning left just before the bridge to take in the east side of the peninsular. This took me to the old WW1 battery, which is a minor tourist attraction and then it was back to Poolewe and Aultbea.



In conclusion, the ride was harder than a typical Suffolk ride, but not that much. Overall, the pace worked out very similar to normal. The total ascent was 1,610m over a distance of 107 km. A ride in Suffolk of the same length would generally be about 1,000m of ascent.

Other than that, the roads were generally good, traffic not a problem and the scenery was excellent.

What's not to like?

Reflections of an old-timer – Part 2

In part 1 I made reference to youth hostel weekends and tours. They have certainly changed! At best, they're extremely difficult, if not impossible. That said, perhaps some families who have discovered leisure cycling are using them.

I know several of you, like me, have happy memories of hostelling. Mike and Judy have mentioned the Christmas parties at Naughton Mill. I never went to those, but I did go to the November fireworks parties, and it was the hostel I used the most. Bill and Stella were very hospitable wardens. Not only were their meals of proper cyclist size, they always invited you over later in the evening for coffee and cakes. Indeed, most hostel meals were excellent value. For a few years, the Norwich Cycling Association organised an annual Christmas party at Blaxhall. Some years it worked out to be the day before the then annual carol service at Pulham Market. Riding from the hostel to the service the day after the party made it an especially enjoyable weekend. How ironic Blaxhall has now closed and is returning to its original purpose, a school.



There are now just two hostels in East Anglia, Cambridge and Sheringham. It's easy to understand why Cambridge survives. Sheringham is in a lovely part of north Norfolk, but I think it's far more because it's pretty much a watered-down hotel (I don't mean that facetiously). I was amused to have a teasmade in my room (yes, a room, not a dormitory, although it was a bunk type bed). That YHA management was starting to think differently was perhaps demonstrated by the fact the current Sheringham hostel was purpose built and the previous one was closed (anyone remember it?). Considering Sheringham's location, I understand it. However, one could make the same location argument for the former Hunstanton hostel, now a privately run backpackers hostel. There are several others the YHA has sold off to become private hostels. The number of YHA hostels is now just 11 in England and Wales, although they operate some camping barns and such like.



One can get bogged down debating the course the YHA took. My position is that while I think they've too far in some respects, I was broadly sympathetic that for the YHA to survive, significant change was needed. Hostelling was seriously declining in popularity. Frankly, cyclists in particular, deserted them massively. I think many of the outright critics were those who didn't want to accept that hard truth. Many would moan about noisy school parties. Well, firstly, they were the reason for the original idea of youth hostels, by a German schoolmaster. Secondly, wardens would tell you if it wasn't for school parties the YHA as we knew it, would cease to exist. It has anyway, but it would have happened far sooner. I acknowledge I too experienced school parties when the teachers should have supervised the children better.



Several hostels stopped providing meals, and they were meagre at those that still did. On some occasions, after evening meal, hostel staff came and asked if everyone had had enough to eat. I felt sorry for them for feeling they had to do that, but it was the situation the YHA was in. Management had obviously issued strict instructions about meal sizes.

It was very frustrating that I started having great difficulty being able to use hostels. I was still racing so hostelling was predominantly an autumn/winter activity for me. They were either closed for the winter or groups were hiring them. That said, I even had difficulty in the summer months. One Saturday afternoon I was looking at my bank account online, reviewing the direct debits and standing orders. As it had been such a long time since I had stayed at a hostel, I questioned if it was worth continuing my membership. It wasn't an easy decision. My hand hovered on the mouse for several minutes, but eventually, with a feeling of sadness, I clicked "delete." I was later interested to discover it's now possible to book YHA stays through booking.com. I wonder if that in itself makes the point about the YHA's situation..

Now to explain where I think they have gone too far. There was a Channel 4 documentary on the YHA's change of direction. It seems hostels in cities like Manchester and Liverpool are very much being used as cheap 'crash-outs' for young people on pub crawls, who can return as late as 2.00 am. I disagree with that. I wouldn't want anyone coming into my dormitory at that time, the worse for drink! I also question whether some hostel closures were necessary, especially in East Anglia. I think Hunstanton is a case in point, and Norwich.

I'm interested to know what others think.

John Thompson

To be continued

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Another good ride courtesy of CTC Suffolk – and Greater Anglia

By John Thompson

It was effectively CTC Suffolk who introduced me to the Cedars Pantry cafe at Wetheringsett.

On the day, I didn't make it to the MP ride lunch stop at Mendlesham. However, as I enjoyed the cafe, I decided to go again, and this time go to Mendlesham and then to Ipswich for the train home. It would enable me to ride some lanes for the first time.

I decided that, as before, my route to Wetheringsett would be via Stradbroke. However, there are a number of possible routes from Oulton Broad/Lowestoft to Stradbroke. Although it was still along familiar lanes, I decided to take a slightly different route than usual

I rode via Hulver, Weston, Redisham and Ilketshall St Lawrence to Rumburgh. From there, I diverted from my usual routes to go to Linstead Parva. The crossroads at Linstead Parva involves a short but quite steep descent to go straight on for a typical short east Suffolk hill. Onward to Cratfield, and then through a maze of pleasant lanes, some involving cattle grids, to one of my favourite local spots, Chippenhall Green (I'm cursing myself for not taking a photo!). Then a short spurt on the B1118, before following lanes via Pixey Green to Stradbroke.



At Stradbroke, I judged I was hungry enough to justify buying a two-sandwiches pack from the Spar. I sat on a seat to eat them and drink a Lucozade.

From Stradbroke, I followed the B1117 through Horham, to turn left along the lane to Redlingfield and then to Occold. Amusingly, the lane I initially followed out of Occold, goes to the hamlet of Dublin, and is named Dublin Road (another curse for not taking a photo). I didn't visit Dublin (I must do, some time!), turning right to join the B1077, which I followed southwards to turn right to Thorndon.. From there I turned left to follow the pleasant wooded lanes, some of which form parts of the Mid-Suffolk Cycle Route, and the Suffolk Historic Churches Cycle Route, to Wetheringsett.

I'm not greatly into reading online reviews about places. However, I did chance on one for the Cedars Pantry. The person comments that the young staff are helpful and engaging. He is correct and they are a major part of the pleasure of going there. The other part is that the food is good. No surprise that I had the all-day breakfast! I admit it was more than I needed, despite having ridden just over 37 miles. Possibly, if I hadn't had the sandwiches at Stradbroke, I might have avoided feeling over-full, but I didn't worry about it!

After lunch, I followed, the first of the first-time lanes for me through Brockford Green, to junction with the A140, where I turned right, for a short spurt, to take first left, for another 'first-timer' to Mendlesham.

It's quite picturesque, so I paused to take photos. It turned into quite a long pause! By now there was hardly a cloud in the sky, if any, and it was very warm. Despite the short distance I had only come since a too-big lunch, I thought "What the heck," and made use of the village store for another Lucozade and my usual favoured white chocolate Magnum. I found a seat and savoured not having far to go, thus able to sit and enjoy the sun for a while



When I disciplined myself to get moving again, I followed the lane through Mendlesham Green, toward Middlewood Green, but turning left before then, to then turn right, to make it a hat-trick of

first-time lanes, through Little Stonham. It was also my first visit to the village. I then had another short spurt on the A140, descending to the crossroads with the A1120, to turn left to Stonham Aspell. From there, I followed the now familiar route to me, passing the Woodfarm Business Centre (resisting the temptation of the cafe!), to Coddensham, then to Gt Blakenham, for a busy few miles, along the B1113 to Sproughton, where I turned left onto NCN 51. Most, possibly all, readers will be familiar with the locality and the route. However, for me not being local, this is where it got adventurous – well, so to speak. I can't, strictly speaking, say I was unfamiliar with the route as I had used it once before. On that occasion, I found it strange to be heading back into the countryside toward Westerfield.. I thought I must have missed a turning. Mike Scott confirmed I should have turned right at a certain point. This time, I turned right at what I thought was the "certain point," only for a resident to direct me back to Route 51. I came to a t-junction, and decided to be brave. After turning right, instead of turning left to continue on Route 51, I carried straight-on. This took me to what I think was the A140 – you will know if I'm correct or not. Whatever, it has cycle lanes for a good way, so busy as it was I was comfortable (being such a traffic-hardened rider, I would have been anyway), and found my way through Ipswich to the station. From what I could fathom, however, Route 51 does indeed go to Westerfield, so I sort of did and didn't go wrong before.. I guess the now Walk, Wheel, Cycle Trust, wanted to avoid sending cyclists along the busy road that junctions with the A140, and then along it. As it has cycle lanes, in my opinion, it would be okay. The roads from Westerfield into Ipswich are also busy, although I'm not sure how far the cycle lanes extend. Possibly the route was devised before the lanes alongside the A140 were in place. If it's apparent to those of you local to it that there are points I'm unaware of, please say.

In conclusion, a rewarding ride, as I said, in effect, thanks to CTC Suffolk and Greater Anglia - 60.08 miles..



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