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Spotlight – Magazine of the CTC Essex DA, a local member group of
CTC, the national cyclists' organisation

President: Brian Penny

Volume 04/2009

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| Closing date for the Sept/Oct 2009 edition is on 14 August 2009. |
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| | |
|---|--|
| CTC Essex DA | www.essexcycling.co.uk |
| Website of the Havering section | www.haveringctc.btik.com |
| Chris' site: CTC South East Group - route planning resource | www.ktphotonics.co.uk/ctc |
| Cyclists' Touring Club | www.ctc.co.uk |

Editor's foreword

After moving, getting settled and having set up "my office" to work on all the important issues, I finally got round to arrange this edition of the Spotlight.

Bit late after the closing date, and I promised myself that this won't happen again. Peter needs this edition tonight so that it is ready for the committee meeting on coming Wednesday. This is possible due to the electronic production from text to booklet. A big apology to the people who have postal subscription.

The issue was nearly finished, when on Tuesday my hard disk (a vital part of the computer memory system) died. Lucky for those who live without electronic support, but a tragedy for me as my life is on this piece of metal and plastic. Anyway, I had to recreate this magazine issue from last month's issue. "Fortunately" I hadn't received the president's piece yet, so I can lay the blame for late publishing elsewhere.

But guess what? – I got the first opportunity on snipping around some reports. There was only little to edit, but to loose one page so that the booklet didn't have 3 empty pages. On the other side the content of the magazine may seem a bit dense. Any light-hearted contributions would be gratefully received.

Keeping it short was helped by only two reports that I received from the Chelmsford member group. Either they got lost in the post or during the move – I'll put them in next time if they re-appear – but I missed the eloquently written reports from Dave Russel.

A 100miler in May of the Havering member group and extensive ride reports from them and the South East MG with also a description of the St Pancras station should make for interesting reading as well as Chris Mills' essay about their "Route to Cape Wrath".

Your editor,

Stefan Eichenseher



The President's piece

What can I tell you about events during the last couple of months? I've organised a couple of events in Mountnessing and Colchester but have sadly had to miss out on Brian Taylor's Audax ride and will probably also miss the Strawberry Tea. There are so many Essex members that have retired and I can't wait to join them myself one day to have some free time to do what comes best.

To be accurate I have actually been riding my bicycle quite a lot recently. I finished my Piece in the last edition of Spotlight by explaining my frustration with delays in ordering a fold-up bicycle through the Government's tax free cycle scheme. I was just about to buy the fold up from my own account without the tax free benefits, when the application suddenly came through. With certificate in hand I shot down Victoria Street in London to pick up the bike and discover how the folding mechanism works. It's very clever and folds small enough to sit in an unloved corner out of harms way of a railway carriage. I have used it twice a day since May to get to and from work via Basildon and through central London. It's great fun and I've lost weight in the process.

But since then there have been problems. It rides really well but I've been cursed with numerous punctures, handlebars that won't lock in the upright position and a chain set that grinds with all class of cement mixer. How come has my pride and joy become so troublesome? Strangely, a colleague who bought a similar bike has had no problems at all. My frustration hit the red line one evening when having repaired a puncture in the office, I punctured again down the Strand. It's difficult to hear the hissing of escaping air from an inner tube when London's traffic is thundering by. An enquiry to a side office to repair the puncture in the reception area was greeted by "not here mate, the Managing Director's about to leave" was very annoying. Back outside the office trying to fix the puncture in full view of London a tourist then started taking photographs of me on all fours struggling to find to apply patch to tube. With puncture fixed I jumped back on the bike only for the tyre to explode at Mansion House.

The above puncture was traced to the beading coming away from the tyre wall and was easily fixed. As I write this article I've had to leave the fold up at work again because of another dose of punctures. At this rate I'll win the puncture award.

All the best,
Brian

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Member Groups' Reports

Chelmsford Member Group

May 3rd - Goldhanger - On a fine day 6 of us set off from Chelmsford for elevenses at Maldon. It was out of Chelmsford via the cycle path to Sandford Mill, then through to Sandon and up to Danbury via the lakes road where Les punctured. With puncture mend almost completed, Betty and I pressed on via the back road from Runsell Green fully expecting the others to catch us up well before Maldon. After waiting for over 5 min by the police station with still no sign of the others and the 'Saffron Tea Rooms' being very busy with a group of motor cyclists Betty and I carried on to Tesco where we took elevenses. A phone call informed us that they were at 'Saffron Tea Rooms' so we arranged to meet by Netto in Haybridge. This done we continued via the lanes to Goldhanger. With 'The Cricketers' only doing full Sunday lunches Edgar Brian and myself took lunch at 'The Chequers' while Betty Beryl and Les ate their sarnies in the churchyard, before joining us in the pub for liquid refreshment with Ken and Maureen joining us a little later.

Suitably replenished we returned to Bonsay Downs for threeses where we met Dave R who had ridden the DA 80k. From there the group split up to make their own ways home. **Pete Moore.**

May 24th – Aspenden - It was sunny and bright as we set off to Stansted Mountfitchet for elevenses at 'Yeoman's café'. Already ensconced were John and Margaret who had arrived on their faithful old trike. Shortly after we arrived Adrian appeared having missed the start. Two went back while the rest proceeded up the steep hill out of Stansted Mountfitchet. More hills lay in wait as we went through Furneux Pelham and Buntingford arriving at 'The Fox', where Peter, our man in Cambridge, was sitting sunning himself.

The only food available was from a barbeque, which wasn't very good. Better than starving I suppose, although I should imagine Peter was still hungry as he normally has the Sunday roast. Sawbridgeworth was chosen for threeses, a fairly obvious choice. We said goodbye to Peter and set out in the direction of Puckeridge via Westmill. I made an error in navigation, turning too early for Puckeridge which entailed riding along the A10 for a short way. We got to the antiques centre where tea and muffins

awaited us, but not before we climbed, with creaking legs, two steep flights of stairs to the penthouse café.

All that remained was to get home, a mere twenty miles or so. We had just got past the church in Sheering when Les had a puncture, fortunately in the front wheel. After that rest of the journey was uneventful and we arrived home completing 75 miles. **E Oliver**

Havering Member Group

April 5th – After a change of destination due to the Ongar railway still being shut for winter maintenance, Adrian, Alex on his new Dave Yates touring cycle, and Mike set off heading for their new destination of Pleshey. As they approached the Ongar Bakery they were piped to the post by a large group of cyclists, so their plan cuppa stop was abandoned. Carrying on through Fyfield and Willingale to reach Pleshey and the ‘Leather Bottle’ they found our Brian already installed. Brian was the first to leave while the other were still tucking into their pub lunches. The threesome return journey took them through Good Easter, Willingale and just before Blackmore they came upon our Brian again and after a quick chat they sped off and made good time to reach home. Just for the record our Brian clocked up his biggest mileage for 15 months on this ride of 66 miles. **Mike Mecham**

April 12th – A grey and misty Easter Sunday for this Softees ride saw Phyllis, Paul, Dave and Brian heading for South Wealds Country Park. Taking the noisy cycle path beside the A127, then that climb up Folkes Lane where they took a slight detour around the Folks Lane Country Park. Despite the hilly tracks the noisy M25 and the views hidden by mist it was rather enjoyable sitting at the Parks viewpoint. Back on their original route over the Motorway and along the bridleway they climbed up Beredens Lane to Dark Lane and Mascalls Lane and over the A12-foot/cycle path to Wealds Park Way and a much earned cuppa. Their return trip was much more main roads but because of this holiday weekend the traffic was much less than normal. The ups and downs of Nags Head Lane led to Hall Lane and through Cranham to Pike Lane and yet another cuppa, in the temporally (just over Easter) café. Though this had been a short ride of just over 20 miles, it had been rather lumpy and muddy at times but still very enjoyable too. **E.C. Ryder**

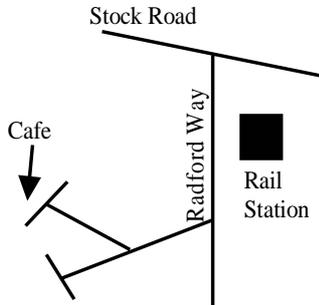
Continued on page 11

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Member Groups' Reports - continued

April 19th – Four riders, Adrian, Alex, Brian and Dave set off on a fine sunny morning bound for Maldon. Fen Lane led us to Bulphan and Dunton where we did battle with the boot sale traffic then a brisk climb through the woods where the Bluebells were putting on a fine display. A plunge down Botney Hill and another climb and we headed for Billericay and our 11's stop at Hanningfield Reservoir. I took the opportunity to peel off a layer and as we sat outside a huge cloud of gnats descended but thankfully they left us alone. Passed East Hanningfield and Bicknacre we reached Maldon. At the Promenade Park it was nice and sunny but not too warm in the breeze. The sheds were raided for sausages, chips and drinks. On our return journey the wind which held us back on the way out now pushed us back to the Hanningfields and onto Stock. At Buttsbury Ford we declined a wetting as the water looked a bit ferocious. On through Hutton where Brian then told us to go on as the hills had taken their toll. This was Brian's longest ride for about 15 months. Brian then made his way back via Childeritch Lane while the rest carried on for a fast plunge down Warley Hill after which we spilt for home clocking up 71 miles in the process. **David Rowlands**

April 26th – A sunny start for this Softees Ride saw Brian leading Phyllis, Paul, Dave and Stuart out of Upminster by an unusually route through the back streets just for a change. Then they whizzed through North Ockendon, Orsett and Horndon-on-the-Hill to reach Langdon Hills for their cuppa, which was enjoyed sitting in the garden soaking up the sun. Afterwards Dave headed off to Basildon while the rest now with a tailwind sped off at a Softees pace through Bulphan and along Fen Lane, to split for home outside Manor Farm. **E.C. Ryder**

May 3rd – Just Phyllis, Stuart and Brian out for this Easy Ride on a chilly and breezy morning so after a few climbs a cuppa stop was called for in King George Park café. Then in Hanging Hill Lane they met up with a 25 plus strong Central London CTC Group. We and I'm guessing many motorists were please when they turned off our route, as their road discipline was something that gets all cyclists a bad name! The rest of our ride through Mountnessing and Ingatestone was uneventful to reach Margaretting Tye and the White Hart for lunch. It was also good to see Charles Comport out and about cycling. Pointing their wheels toward Blackmore the threesome made good time to reach St. Lawrence church for a cuppa and those yummy cakes! Reaching Upminster their computers said they had done 40 miles!

Meanwhile back at Mountnessing Church Hall Alex Kornfeld & David Rowlands were enjoying a well earned cuppa after riding the **Essex DA 80k event. E.C. Ryder**

May 10th – Just Phyllis & Paul out on this sunny morning with the destination to be Rainham Marshes. Their route took them through Belhus Country Park, past the swimming pool and through Aveley Village, then across the A1306 into Purfleet and the Visitor Centre. Just as they were locking our bikes up, who should turn up, but Tashfeen. She was going to meet the group at Roomes but thought that she had a puncture. So after pumping up the tyre and waiting to see if it stayed up, it was too late to meet up with them and decided to go for a ride on her own. She was lucky to have met the group, then. After their cuppa they decided to visit the Heritage Centre in Purfleet, which was an old Gunpowder store and they were pleasantly surprised at the amount of exhibits there - a lot of them about the last war. One of them was a bike from 1918 with both brake levers and a bell on the left hand side of the handlebars; this belonged to a person with only one arm. The bike was in really good condition and probably with new inner tubes & tyres would still be able to use today. The Heritage Centre as a teashop so that another excuse for a cuppa before setting off for home. They cycled home via the track running parallel with the River Thames, ended up at Rainham where Paul was leaving them off to Barking, Tashfeen to Elm Park leaving Phyllis at her front door. **Phyllis Gregory**

May 17th – Just two 'Early Birds' John W. and myself set off at 06.30 on an overcast morning to the accompaniment of strange noises coming from John's gears. Traffic free (well nearly) roads led to South Wealds, Writtle and Howe Street with a couple of stops to adjust John's gear cable, and to put our waterproofs on near Felstead. 11's were had at Andrewsfield while watching the planes coming and going. Then we went on through Shalford to Wethersfield and Castle Hedingham, too early for the pubs to be open, so we continued on through Great Maplestead to Halstead where we found a café. When leaving the café the sun had come out, but now we had a headwind to contend with as we pushed for home through Stisted and onto Channel Golf Club for our 3's. Light rain greeted us as we emerged from the Channels, and we made our way through Broomfield, Ingatestone to Brentwood. At the Nags Head we parted company, John bound for Upminster and myself to Dagenham clocking up 101 miles for the day. **David Rowlands**

May 24th – A lovely sunny & warm morning for this Softees ride saw Brian, Phyllis, Tashfeen and John taking an uneventful ride out to Langdon Hill's for their cuppa. On their return trip, they had to climb up Fen Lane, followed by a spot of rough stuff to reach North Ockendon Church. So it's no surprise that they had to call into the Craft Show in Pike Lane for another cuppa after all that hard cycling! **E.C. Ryder**

May 25th – Compared to yesterday today's ride was rather cool and overcast, but this didn't stop Phyllis, Tashfeen, John, Brian and last but not least new rider Raatvy from London going out this Bank Holiday Monday. Taking the A127 cycle path and then the Bridleway over the M25 they were soon enjoying a cuppa in King George Park café. Then they sped on through Hutton to Mountnessing for a photo session at the Windmill. They continued onto Blackmore for the village fayre for a cuppa and some yummy cakes. As they were leaving Blackmore two things happened: one, the sun came out at last, and two they spotted staggering out of the King Head, John & Joyce Greet, Kathy & Roland Coldwell. Nothing exciting happened on their route back to Upminster, just a pleasant ride with 30 miles on their computes. **E.C. Ryder**

May 31st – A lovely warm and sunny morning and just three riders out for this 08.30 start with the advertised destination being Green Tye, Herts, but Dave wanted to be home early and Stuart thought the mileage would be too much for him. So this saw our leader Brian abandoning this destination and put plan B into action. After that climb up Wigley Bush Lane they sped through Navestock and Toot Hill to Matching Green for an early 11's beside the pond. Abbess Roding was followed by a stop at Willingale to visit the two churches. After Blackmore for cold drinks from the village shop, they parted company in Upminster at 3.30pm with mileage around the 56 mark. **E.C. Ryder**

South East Essex Member Group

19th April - 18 riders converged on Bringley Pine this morning coming in from different directions. The group that I led said, what a good route I have chosen, but I think that this was to do with the display of spring followers that we passed along the way - not my leadership. After 11s seven set of for lunch at Little Green, whereby I changed my intended route for another one and found an old water mill with a river running through it still and a large pond at the side. We were directed to the bridleway leading from the river by a local who lived in one of the lovely old houses by the river. The road above then led us to the church at Little Waltham. From there it was an easy ride to 'The Compass' for

our huffers. On the way back we made a mad dash for Battlesbridge in the hope that we wouldn't miss our bread pudding and a cuppa, then on to home with 75+ miles on the clock.

26th - April - The weather wasn't looking too good to start with, but it improved and the day was very sunny and not too cool for the **George Welch** event. I had hired the village hall at South Hanningfield this year to see what difference it made to the numbers (Brentwood, Chelmsford, Colchester and Havering sections were very much in short supply). 24 SEEMGs took part in the event, including 4 from Danbury as a family group. Well done to Daniel and Alexander riding the tandems with mum and dad. The rest of the riders were made up of Essex Roads CC, Southend Wheelers, or members of the public), in total 14. Many had either heard about the event or were brought along by their cycling friends (Chris W brought two friends from work with him who borrowed his son's bikes). Two riders from the SEEMG were seen at the start, Derek W and John H, which meant at the end of the day including myself there had been 28 members from the SEEMG at the start - not bad for a group attendance. I went round the shortest course with the 10 mile entries. Going along Middlemead I suddenly realised that I had no drive on the bike. Riding a fixed wheel bike, I thought, how come? All was revealed when I came to a standstill. The bungee strap holding my bag on the rack had sprung off and dropped between the sprocket and the spokes but not before being cut in half by the teeth and chain, OOPS).

29th April - I had been asked for nearly a year if I would lead a ride to St Pancras Station by some of the members. Finally I made a date with them and we set off on what turned out to be another warm and sunny day. On the way through Plaistow Peter H, was hooted by quite a few motorists for jumping the red light while trying to follow me. We made our way to Victoria park for our 11's making sure that our bikes were well and truly locked up and within our sight at all times - I didn't want a repetition of the last trip to London.

After our 11s we set off up the Regents canal along a section none of us had ridden before, I found the sections under the bridges to be the worst as they were only about 2' or 2' 6" wide and also blind as the path turns away from your sight. Still we made it to the station without any problems. These started when we got there with a gentleman speaking to us about our bikes (or clothing) in a strange language and he kept pointing at us and our bikes while getting excited. Needless to say we moved on across the road to find somewhere safe to leave our bikes.

Continued on page 20

Forthcoming Events



Organisers: please advise me of what you wish to be included

| Date | Event | Organiser |
|-------------|--|------------------------------|
| 19 Jul | DA 100 mile/160k event (Start: from 8am at St John's Church Hall, Mountnessing, OS167, TL638012) | John Steer 01702 309958 |
| 6 Sept | DA Roughstuff (Start 10am in car park opp. 'Cricketers' PH, Mill Green, OS167, TL638012) | Brian Taylor 01277 657867 |

Easy Rider Meets



| | | |
|---------|---------------|-------------------|
| 9 Aug | The Viper | Mill Green |
| 13 Sept | The Crown | Ingatstone |
| 10 Oct | The Compasses | West Hanningfield |

Easy Rider Lunch Meets - for details contact Pete Moore 01245 263165

Brentwood Member Group – Runs List



Secretary: Steve Bearpark
43 Court Avenue, Harold Park, RM3 0XS, ☎ 01708 375018,
steve@stevebearpark.com

Colchester Member Group – Runs List



Secretary: Alan Palmer
☎ 01206 792929, mob 07939 395067 or
alanpalmer@phonecoop.coop

Members are welcome to attend *Bike Drinks*, for all local cyclists, held on the second Tuesday of the month, 8pm at The Bricklayers (CO4 5AA)

Chelmsford Member Group – Runs List**Secretary:** Adrian Leeds

4 Oaklands Crescent, Chelmsford CM2 9PR, ☎ 01245 260272

Runs Secretary: Dave Russell

7 Willows Crescent, Hatfield Peverel, ☎ 01245 381055

Rides Start: Sundays: Civic Theatre, Fairfield Road 9am for 9.15am

All day rides start 9.15am

For Tuesday evening destinations

call Peter Moore ☎ 01245 263165 or Dave Russell ☎ 01245 381055

| Date | Destination | 11ses | Leader |
|-------------|--|-------------------------|---------------|
| 12 Jul | Heybridge Basin | Perrywoods | D Emery |
| ALSO: | <i>Strawberry Tea</i> , Purleigh Village Hall Grid Ref: 836021 (3 pm) | | John Davis |
| 19 Jul | Lavenham | Aldham | E Oliver |
| Alt: | <i>DA 160K (J Steer)</i> | | |
| 26 Jul | Hadstock | Blue Egg, Gt. Bardfield | D Russell |
| 02 Aug | Dane End | Sawbridgeworth | L Hurrell |
| 08 Aug | 8th to 15th August CTC Birthday Rides Rockingham Forest (Details from the CTC Head Office) | | |
| 09 Aug | Henny Street | Coggeshall | A Leeds |
| 16 Aug | Little Walden | Thaxted | E Oliver |
| 23 Aug | East Mersey | Heybridge Basin | B Taylor |
| 30 Aug | Mildenhall Rally | | |
| or | Informal | | |
| 06 Sep | Long Melford | Greenstead Green | A Leeds |
| Alt: | <i>DA Rough-Stuff</i> | | |
| 13 Sep | Edwardstone | Aldham | P Tibbits |

Havering Member Group – Runs List



Secretary: Brian Stevens

3 Gidea Close, South Ockendon, RM15 6PF

☎ 01708 851636 or bristevens@btinternet.com

Memberships Secretary: Phyllis Gregory ☎ 01708558221

phylgreg@homecall.co.uk

Runs Start: Roomes (Home & Fashion) Store, Station Road, Upminster

All rides meet 09.15 for 09.30 start unless otherwise stated

Softies Rides: Meet 09.45 for 10.00 start

| | Destination | Leader |
|-----------------------|--|---------------|
| Aug 16 th | Softies Ride | |
| Aug 23 rd | Heybridge Basin | Brian Stevens |
| Aug 30 th | Softies Ride | |
| Aug 31 st | Bank Holiday ride (09.30 start) | Brian Stevens |
| Sept 6 th | <i>DA Roughstuff</i> | |
| or | Easy with Brian | |
| Sept 13 th | Softies Ride | |
| Sept 30 th | Burnham-On-Crouch (08.00 start) | Brian Stevens |
| Sept 27 th | Softies Ride | |
| Oct 4 th | West Hanningfield | Brian Stevens |

The Havering local website is <http://www.haveringctc.btik.com>.

Another addition to our list of possible destinations

“Yesterday we chanced on the opening day of a new cafe in the old railway station at Rayne, near Braintree [on the Flich Way]. It's run by two friendly ladies and is located in the nice old waiting room and offers all the usual drinks, cakes and snacks that cyclists need. It's now open 7 days a week from 8 to 5 until September, in winter it's weekends only.”

Chris Mills by email, May 2009

South East Essex Member Group – Runs List**Secretary:** John Steer☎ 01702 309958 – e-mail jonsue@blueyonder.co.uk**Runs start:** from Halls Corner, Wickford SS12 0AW,
Sundays at 9.30am, unless otherwise stated.Club Nights are the 2nd & 4th Fridays of the Month
@ St Laurence All Saints Church Hall,
Eastwoodbury Lane, Eastwood

| Date | Elevenses | Destination for Lunch |
|------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| July | | |
| 19 th | Bunsay Downs (Golf Club) | Bradwell (Green Man) |
| Or | Parent Member Group (DA) | Organiser J Steer |
| | 100 mile/160k Event | |
| 26 th | Maldon (Morrison's) 09.00 start | Rowhedge (The Anchor) |
| August | | |
| 2 nd | Grt Baddow (Bringey Pine) | Purleigh (The Bell) |
| 9 th | Writtle (Gdn Cntr Tea Rooms) | Nounsley (Sportsman) |
| 16 th | Ingatstone (Gdn Cntr Café) | Chipping Ongar (The Cock Tavern) |
| Or | Hythe Dungeness | Organiser J Steer |
| 23 rd | Margaretting (Saddlery Café) | Little Waltham (White Hart) |
| 30 th | Bunsay Downs (Golf Club) | Grt Totham (Green Man) |
| September | | |
| 6 th | Round Bush (Café) | Bradwell Waterside (Green Man) |
| Or | Rough Stuff | Organiser Brian Taylor |
| Or | Leukaemia event | Contact John Steer |
| 13 th | Billericay (Lake Meadows) | (Stapleford Tawney) |
| 20 th | Writtle (Gdn Cntr Tearooms) | Felstead (The Chequers) |
| 27 th | Morrisons (Café) | Burnham (The Anchor) |
| Or | Viking Trail | Organiser John Steer |

Also a member's website with other cycling information about the group with GPX and TrackLogs (TCX) files provided: www.ktphotonics.co.uk/ctc.

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Member Groups' Reports - continued

Ian B offered to safeguard our bikes as he had been and seen the station before while we four had a look. Very impressive it is to - all the soot has been cleaned off of the roofing steels and new glass installed. Two rather large sculptures were on display. After our look around we enquired for the return fare to Paris by Euro Star. Not bad price £59 odd for a period return and you can now book your bike in to travel on the same train as yourself, but you must book it in early.

From the station we made our way to a café near Camden where we all enjoyed a cheap lunch with some having extras in the way of apple pie and either custard or ice cream. We then had to find our way back to the canal, after asking a couple of passing cyclists we were directed to the path close by. On the way through the Angel at Islington I was hooted at by a police car which had its blue lights and siren going, which was behind me trying to turn right into the same road as myself, they obviously had no consideration for cyclists who don't have eyes in the back of their heads. Back on the canal we headed for Victoria Park again for a drink and cake then on back to Wanstead with another good ride on the books.

3rd May - The **80k event** was lacking in numbers which was noticed by the regular riders of the event. It couldn't have been because of the weather as we had no rain, the wind wasn't gale force, the sun shone for most of the event and the strangest thing of all was the Compass at Littley Green. It was empty inside when I went in to order my food and drink, there were about eight people sitting outside in the sun waiting for food. Dot had put on her usual good spread of food for the riders, while Brian's organisation went well, perhaps another article in the Cycle next year might draw more riders.

10th May - A group of nine riders met at the "Le Café Cream", Birchington, for a ride on the Viking Trail. For once the weather gods were being good to us as I have ridden it in a heat wave, heavy rain and high winds but today's ride was in near perfect conditions. I altered the ride to Manston Airport and took in a new section which was quieter than the main Manston Road. The café at the Museum was nearly empty for a change. Even so we sat outside in the sun - while we still had it. We stopped of at a pub on the way back for some to use their loos (which meant a good excuse to have a pint of local fair).

The ride saw four of our new riders riding either brand new bikes or bikes new to them, but they all coped very well with the ride - even on the rough-stuff at the end. I made a detour to the Reculver to see if the route

extension was in progress, but sadly it hadn't even been started. On our return to Minnis Bay we found that the Restaurant/Café had burnt out by (as the sign said) YOBS. This meant that we didn't get a drink or a cake before departing for home.

17th May - 19 met at the start of what turned out to be a very wet morning for some. I led the ride to 11s while Chris W, led a smaller group on the longer ride and for a change we all arrived together at Bunsay Downs, where we found Andy and Margaret Q. Having caped up we set off for Danbury, then sweated up the hill after 11s. Ten of us set off on a roundabout route to Heybridge Basin when the heavens opened. I then cut short our route and brought us back towards Woodham Walter and asked whether anybody wished to go on, most being soaked to the bones. Just then I was informed that Robin C had been left behind at Bunsay with a puncture but that he would meet us at lunch. All agreed that heading for home was on the cards. On the way I was trying to work out the best lunch stop for us long distance riders. The proposal to go to 'The Hurdlemakers Arms' was dismissed in favour of 'The Lodge' at Rettendon. When we turned off in to Flambards Farm track I found that we had only 7 riders. I was told that the other three had all turned off for their homes further back (I wish members would tell the runs leader earlier when there is a departure from the group). On the way through Flambards Robin C rang to say he had sheltered from the rain and had just fixed his puncture ready to catch us up. We never saw him at the Lodge so we guessed that he had gone straight home while Clive B, turned up at the Rettendon Turnpike from a different direction to us. Three's was off the map as we didn't know when the next shower would be. Even with cutting our ride short we had just over 62 miles on the clock.

24th May - Twelve riders set off in what turned out to be the hottest day of the year so far (the road at Battlesbridge by the café showed melting tar and car tyre marks sunk in to it). After the drag up Church Rd from the London Rd, Wickford the group had split into two groups. The stronger group went one way while I led a smaller group by a route I had planned out the night before. The Saddlery did us proud once again with their service as well as panicking over someone who hadn't paid - me I was still going round trying to sell Spotlights. Just as we were about to go Ray M and Norman B turned up swelling our numbers to 17 out to 11s. Ten of us set off for lunch at Stondon Massey. On our arrival at 'The Bricklayers Arms' there was a person taking photographs of cyclists.

Continued on page 23

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Member Groups' Reports - continued

When I asked why he was taking photos he said he was taking them for us. As it turned out there was an event on at Blackmore which included a bike ride to the pub and he thought that we were part on the event. Now there will be a few debates as to who the strange group were.

On the way back through Paslow Common we heard a male Peacock up in a tree screeching at us. The group carried on via Blackmore, Swallows Cross, Mountnessing and on to Battlesbridge. The group split up along the way until only three made it to the café for tea and cakes, I arrived home with 73 miles on the clock.

31st May - What a shambles today's ride turned out to be. I asked to two members of the group to lead and be tail end Charlies of the second group as Chris W was leading a third group. They obviously got it wrong and some of their group ended up in Chris' group with one puncturing near Bunsay Downs. On the run into Burnham the group split again with Peter H leading from the front dropping four off the back. On the way home from Burnham the group seems to have split in to four groups all going their own way, eventually seven met at Battlesbridge for the ride home.

7th June - 10 of the group made it over the channel to France after driving through heavy rain on the way down to Dover for a day's riding with our French friends. This time the ride was car assisted as our friends are always coming up to Northern France to meet us. After being taken for a twenty odd mile ride in some very quite countryside we returned to their house for some French hospitality and a BB- with a few bottles of twenty year old red wine to share between us. On our return journey we once again had to drive through heavy rain along the motorways. We all seemed to arrive home between 11.00/11.30 pm after another good day in France.

14th June - 4 South East members took part in the **40/40 event** from Copford Green (after some had got lost getting there) it once again was a stunning ride through some of Essex's finest countryside. On our arrival back we where told that we were out of time - oops. As a ride that is trying to encourage new riders to the area it should be taken at a pace of between 8mph/12mph, as it isn't a race to see who can get round the course first. Next year perhaps it could have a slower ride with a longer time for new riders, families; novices not just experienced fast riders that are used to 15mph/20mph pace all day. **J Steer.**



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Essex Cyclist Savaged by [Live] Sheep! **(En Route to Cape Wrath)**

by Chris Mills

For our 2008 'jolly' we, that is Ken Rickwood, Dave Russell, Brian Taylor and I (Chris Mills), decided to take up the Cape Wrath Challenge, riding to the most north westerly part of the UK. The more observant of you may notice that this year for a change I am trying a new report format in place of the day by day one I've used before.

Our journey started again on the Caledonian Sleeper train, this time to Dundee where Brian's reluctance to leave his bunk almost took him on to Aberdeen. From there we rode over the surprisingly hilly Sidlaw hills and via Aberfeldy to Pitlochry, then up Glen Shee and over the notorious Devil's Elbow to Braemar. Next we headed to Tomintoul using the dreaded Lochty Road from Cock Bridge – the one that's always the first to be blocked by snow on the radio travel reports, now we know why, it was a shattering climb to 2090 ft. on the highest road in the UK. Grantown-on Spey came next, then Inverness via Cawdor Castle and Fort George. Having dealt with the Cairngorms we set about the Highlands using an unsurfaced track up Straith Vaich to Bonar Bridge and then through Altnaharra and Hope to Durness. The assault on Cape Wrath was from here.

We returned down the west coast passing Skiag Bridge, Achmelvich and Ullapool from where we repassed the south end of Straith Vaich on our way to Achnasheen and Torridon. Next came Strathcarron, Shiel Bridge, Invergarry and Spean Bridge before reaching Fort William and the sleeper train home. The total mileage for me was 686 in 12 riding days.



Youth Hostels provided our accommodation except for one night in the Bonar Bridge Hotel. The hostel at Inverey, close to Braemar, was a journey back in time – two small dorms, gas 'wood burning stove' in the common room and outside toilets and washbasins with cold water only. We weren't overenthusiastic about getting washed! Beer drinking in

the evening tends to mean nocturnal weeing for us old gits and on one such visit to the undergrowth Dave saw a red squirrel watching him. Next morning the squirrel came right up to the hostel, and a herd of red deer was also very close. Sadly this little gem has probably closed by now. What a contrast this was with the modern hotel-like hostel at Inverness occupied by globe trotting youth like the Canadian in our room who was in and out of the room long after 11 pm until his mobile rang in the middle of the night. Rude words were said.

As usual the weather was unseasonably bad – cold, wet and windy, we only managed to ride in shorts on one day. At least that meant we didn't have much of a midge problem. The day we left Ullapool we were headed straight into a ferocious gale for the first half of the day. Luckily it was Sunday and there wasn't much traffic as we were blown all over the road and at one point the wind gusted so strongly that we all stopped dead and Dave, who was at the back, keeled over on to the verge. Considering the terrain we didn't do too badly for bike problems, two punctures on off-road sections and two broken spokes. We didn't have a spare spoke long enough for one of these, so we had to use two halves and twist the ends together.

We saw quite a variety of wild life including red deer, seals, curlews, a brown hare, grouse, oyster catchers, a kingfisher and a seagull attacking a hawk! Generally there were lots of birds we couldn't identify and we missed Roger, our resident twitcher. On the first couple of days we were surprised to see what appeared to be swathes of lupines growing wild. Naturally there was lots of fabulous scenery, the highlights probably being overlooking the meanders of the River Dee near Inverey and the coast and mountains in sun and heavy rain approaching Durness.

You come across a funny mixture of things on these tours, we saw two lovely old steam trawlers on Loch Lochy and two other ships in Dundee – Captain Scott's Discovery and the Unicorn, from 1824, the oldest battleship still afloat. There was Eilan Donan Castle, much photographed but almost completely a relatively modern rebuild, and near Hope an Iron Age fortification, a broch, completely unspoiled with nobody for miles. It made



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a good shelter for our lunch stop. In Inverness on a cold night we saw a huge fountain from a burst water main and a young man ran out of a bar and stood under it fully clothed, then went back inside. A hard man.



Near Fort William the traffic was stopped because a large load was coming, when it arrived we saw it was a section of the tower of a wind turbine. It had a separate driver at the rear to steer the back end and could lift up the load to clear the bridge parapet. By contrast in the wilderness of Straith Vaich we

came upon the huge fenced-off area where the son of the MFI owner is planning to release wolves and elks into the 'wild'. We also got very close to a large herd of red deer in this remote but really beautiful valley. It was worth 13 miles of tough and rocky road. Smoo Cave at Durness was a very impressive sight, opening on to a super beach of white sand. In Tomintoul we saw what must be the most concentrated collection of old CTC and NCU enamel signs still surviving, I think there were 4 or 5 adorning the 2 hotels.

Not everything we saw was good, the Battle of Culloden Visitor Centre was fine for 3's, but do we really need a large modern 'Disney' experience on this bleak hillside? Also we were disappointed that the notorious Devil's Elbow which was a very tricky and steep hairpin bend hasn't just been bypassed, it's been obliterated by the new improved road. It's sad to wipe out such a famous landmark. All the same it was still a very tough climb in bottom gear into driving rain, we even had to pedal hard going down the other side.

The people were as friendly as ever, once we'd left the more southerly bits, and it was as ever a pleasure to encounter nice young ladies in many cafes and pubs, particularly at the station at Achnasheen where no less than 3 wee lassies served us with 3's. We met various other cyclists, notably one in Dunkeld who's chain stays were both cracked almost right through [spotted instantly by Dave 'Bike Police' Russell] and who hoped to get back to Dundee in that state. We just had to admire an elderly German with a very heavily loaded ATB who not surprisingly wasn't as fast as us, but always caught up whenever we stopped. He was riding from Stuttgart [I think] to Ireland via half of Europe to visit someone and

had been on the road for weeks. Hats off to him, a nice chap. At Liverpool St. on the way home we saw a friendly chap waving to us from a train, so we waved back. Then we realised he was locked in so we went to get help and he was duly released before the train headed to the carriage sidings for the day.

Fuel is of course a top priority on tour and apart from the necessary basics we explored a wide range of Scottish beers and quite a few malts, including a new favourite in Bruichladdich. Home made soups seemed to do well this time, we had a haggis baguette one lunchtime and local oysters for 11's another day near Lochcarron. At Achmelvich Beach, near the Y.H., there is bizarrely a chip shop, so we were able to feast in the hostel on fish and chips and beer we had carried in. We also sampled 'tablet', a Scots speciality made by boiling milk and sugar, I think, and tasting somewhat like Kendal mint cake. I don't recall encountering the redoubtable cloutie dumpling on this trip.

So, what about Cape Wrath? Well first from Durness Hostel we had to check that the weather wasn't too bad for the ferry and then that the military wouldn't be firing on the ranges, both of these looked OK, so we rode the few miles to the ferry. There we had to wait for the 'tourists' to go first, they would then be taken to the Cape by minibus. We jammed ourselves and bikes onto the little boat and were soon walking up the initially steep and rough track from the slipway. Soon we could ride and set off on the wild and hilly 12 miles of bad road to the Cape. The surface was fairly broken and stony, but not quite as bad as Straith Vaich had been, and we were only lightly loaded. It took us 2 hours to get there, including a brief 11's stop, and we took the obligatory photos and looked at the lighthouse, the huge fog horn and the amazing cliffs, the highest in the UK. A handful of other cyclists trickled in as we ate our sandwiches in the simple information/waiting room. The return journey took something under an hour and a half with a tail wind, but we were overtaken with embarrassing ease by a young lady on a Dawes Galaxy. We caught up with her at the ferry and discovered she was doing a 4 week solo camping End to End via a devious route on a borrowed bike. She had set off with her boyfriend but he'd wimped out after a few days whilst she, who was petite and very quiet and unassuming, was made of sterner stuff. For once we'd been lucky with the weather but as soon as we got off the ferry it tipped it down and we rode back together in the rain, we to our cosy hostel, she to a wet field. Hats off to her as well.



And the sheep? We'd only just got off the main road and set off up Straith Vaich when we encountered a flock of sheep and rather too late I realised we had the fatal combination – lamb on one side of us, mother on the other side. Previous experience had showed that this was bad news as the lamb would inevitably rush to its mother at just the wrong moment. So I slowed down, hoping the lamb would dart in front of me, but in fact it waited until I was alongside and tried the mid-air route, leaping up to a great height. Unfortunately its aerial judgement was lacking and it landed on my

shoulders, I wobbled across the track into Ken who wobbled on to the grass, the lamb disappeared. Luckily neither of us actually fell off and no injury was sustained, this would have been a very isolated place to have had to call for assistance.

When we got home we were able to send off to the CTC for our Cape Wrath certificates and badges and look back on a trip which was tough but as usual had its rewards and pleasures.

Thinking of...

... well-known people who enriched the life of our cycling community:

Charles Comport – spent a week in Broomfield Hospital in late May after a slight heart attack, followed by an angiogram. Whilst in there he had a CT scan and was told he was now clear of the pancreatic cancer diagnosed a year ago.

Frank Walker – went to Broomfield Hospital on Wed June 3rd and was fitted with a pacemaker, hopefully this will improve his energy levels.

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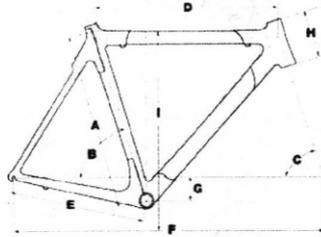
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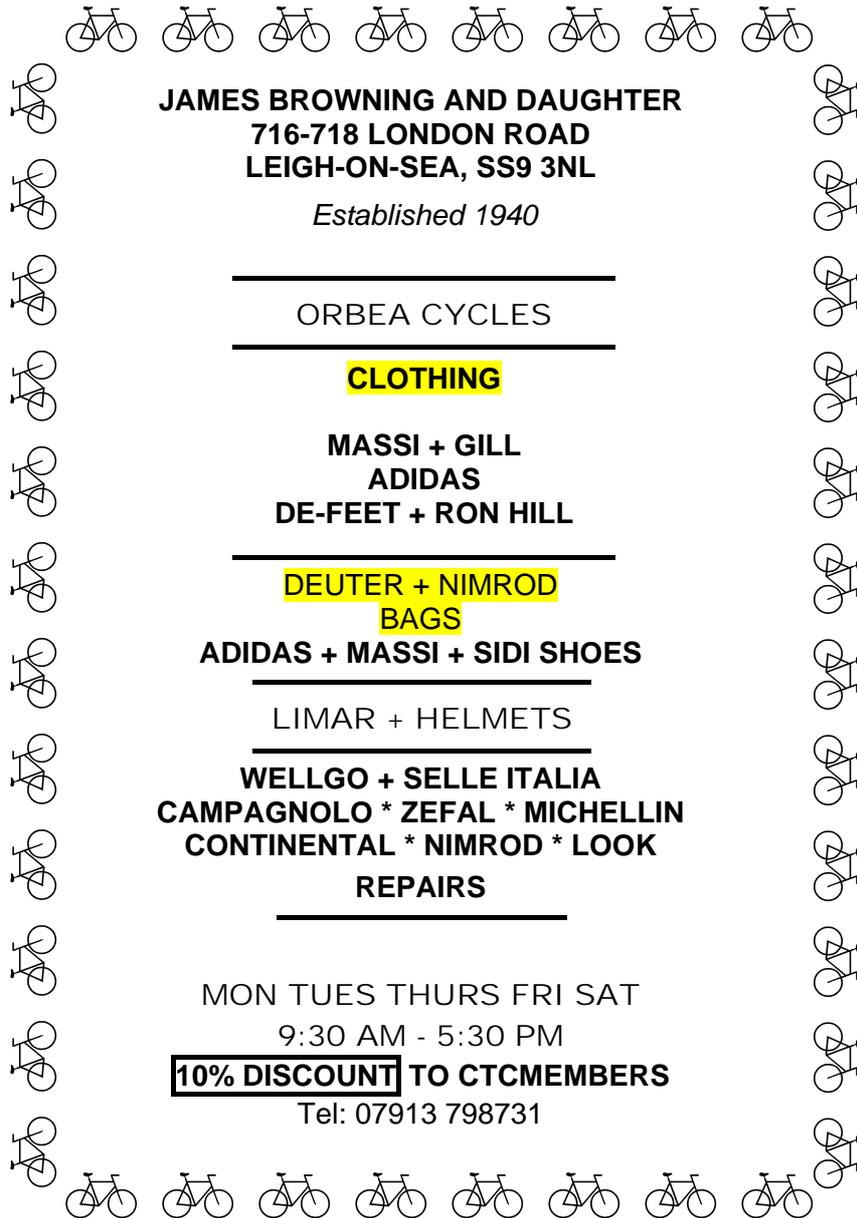


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