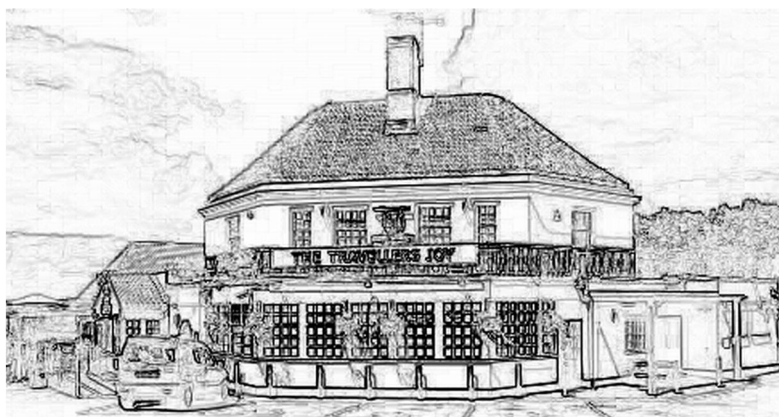




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Spotlight – Magazine of the **Essex CTC MG**, a local **Member Group**
of the **Cyclists’ Touring Club**, the national cyclists’ organisation
President: John Steer Volume 2/2013se26

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The Editor reserves the right to edit contributions for reasons of space, clarity or libel.

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John Davis, Peter Moore, John Steer

Essex CTC MG Trustees

Stefan Eichenseher, John Steer, Brian Penny

Closing date for the May / June 2013 edition is on **15 April 2013**

Editor's foreword

Extraordinary! ... Probably the thinnest version of Spotlight for a long time.

Well, folks, I can put the odd stuff into the mag that I find interesting on the Internet. But in the end, it's yours – your magazine to express your experience in cycling and tell those who are not online, what's going on in the fresh air wide world.

Anyway, the first event of the year had been quite successful, see page 24.

There is an explanation of which rides lead to points for the Inter Group Competition and where you can gain your own awards.

The Chelmsford City MG has now its own website at
www.chelmsfordctc.co.uk.

There are quite a lot of events and MG-own outings coming up.

I wish I were able to ride the in same way, as when I was fit ...

Have fun cycling.

Your editor,
Stefan Eichenseher



The President's piece

We have had now snow cover twice - we could still get more. I don't know, if you have noticed that the snowdrops are out already and one of our groups mentioned seeing crocuses early on our ride. Some members made it to the cycle show in London. There are No reports of what they saw or what they bought yet.

On a brighter note it's nice to know that Dave Russell is back on his bike after his horrific accident and is doing very well, I'm told - well done, David!

I will not be cycling for a couple of months, as I am having an operation, which will put me off of my bike for about that amount of time. This means, I should miss out on some of the worst weather and return, as the weather warms up with lighter mornings and evenings.

I hope that most of the Essex members have entered the SEG's 75 event, and will enter the other Essex events during the summer. They are there for you. They make a change from your usual Sunday ride and bring a bit of competition between the groups, as well as riding with other members from across Essex.

A sample of the new inter-groups' new shirt has been ordered for the group members to view and pass comment, as to whether they wish to order one or more of them. Let's hope they meet our requirements of hard wearing and value for money - after all we are cyclists!

Stay safe and enjoy your cycling where ever you ride.

John Steer

From the 🏠: CycleClips (01/03/2013)

Bike Week is back see further information at
<http://www.bikeweek.org.uk>

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Member Groups' Reports

Chelmsford Member Group

December 23, 2012 - So close to Christmas, I had planned a short festive ride meeting up with the Havering MG at Hanningfield, thence on to lunch together. The five starters hadn't gone very far when, just after Stock, I suffered a rear wheel puncture in a wet, muddy lane. When the (brand new) tube was inflated, the brass valve barrel snapped off halfway up. I must admit to becoming a little vexed at this, which is a poor excuse. But, after rummaging for my second tube, I made the error of pulling out the already punctured one. This error was only discovered after fitting it and riding half a mile. Eventually, I got it sorted, but by then we were running late. Approaching the intended elevenses stop, we met Steve and Dave (of Havering) - coming the other way. They told us that the "Waters Edge Café" was closed for the Christmas period, so we opted instead for "East Hanningfield Garden Centre". After a late "elevenses", we met Diana and Geoff, and the nine of us rode on to the Purleigh "Bell". It was a mild day, enabling us to sit outside, where a lunch of sandwiches and chips was gratefully consumed. The pub's cat was also taking lunch, but (much to everyone's concern) had chosen "blackbird of the day". It ran, clutching the unfortunate avian in its jaws, and was chased across the yard by a very cross Diana. Moral: cats don't know it's Christmas! **Adrian Leeds**

Colchester Member Group

[Unfortunately, there were no reports available from the Colchester Informal Member Group. Ed.]

Havering Member Group

23rd Dec - What a mild day, windy though! Nice to see Brian out today. Two made it to 11ses at BHN, then on to Purleigh with the Chelmsford MG. Just beat the mad rush for lunch. Dined alfresco. Could do with a bit more daylight though, lights on at Stock and pitch black by Hutton. **David Rowlands**

13th Jan - Just thawed out after today's ride! Four to Blackmore for 11ses with the SEG's. Two of us joined them to make up a dirty dozen for lunch at West Hanningfield.

Leaving the pub, we bumped into Anna doing a reccie for a Central London CTC ride. A direct ride back and no headwind for once, cold though!!! **David Rowlands**

3rd Feb - The regulars Alex, Gordon, Stephen and Barry were joined by new rider Helen, who arrived on a very fast looking carbon bike. It turned out not just to be fast looking and the rest of us spent the ride trying to keep up on the ride to 11ses at BHN garden centre in Rettendon. Stephen gave up and let the group go on, on the way back at Hutton. Another member says he was still recovering mid-week. **Stephen Ingall**

10th Feb - Only Stephen turned up, Sniff, so I treated myself to some off-roading around Hainault Forrest

17th Feb - Alex K and John W – who we haven't seen on a ride for a while managed to fit in some cycling around 11ses, lunch and afternoon tea on their ride. **Stephen Ingall**

South East Essex Member Group

30th December – Maldon to Little Braxted - Twenty set out from Wickford heading for Maldon and the “Crystal café” for elevenses. After we'd all had our tea and crumpet (coffee, toast and breakfasts to be precise), we sorted ourselves into two groups, those heading on and those returning. Unfortunately, Dave H who was returning discovered he had a puncture and a few stayed with him to supervise. Nine carried on led by Ian M and went via Heybridge and Great Totham. Unfortunately, we lost Martin P here and despite re-tracing the route he had vanished into an alternate universe. We continued via Beacon Hill, Great Braxted, Noak's Cross and Lea Lane to “The Green Man” pub at Little Braxted and arrived at 1pm. We met John & Sue S, who arrived by car, and later an elusive Martin, who had an interesting tale to tell. Apparently, he'd continued onto Witham and eventually found his way to us after asking for directions. It also transpired that he had found a £20 note on the ground and we all remarked that he had the luck of the Irish or words to that effect.

Our return journey was via Maldon, Purleigh, Flambard's Farm, Edwin's Hall, Creephedge to SWF, where the majority of the group filtered off homeward. I decided to stop at the “Meadowcroft Garden Centre” for refreshments and met Peter H, who was tucking into a teacake. We were later joined by Martin who had stayed for another pint at the pub.

No doubt toasting his good fortune. We left in the twilight (zone) and headed home, which in my case, was Shoeburyness.

1st January – Mill Green - Six met at Wickford at 10am and these were Chris W, Lynda & Jon C, Barry B, Phil N and Ian M. We set out together, but unexpectedly became two groups after some confusion about the route to Mill Green and “The Viper”, when going down Broomwood Lane. Thankfully, we all arrived just before noon and were able to get a seat before it was full. Ken Winters & Peter Hill arrived by car about ten minutes later and struggled to find a seat (they said we were sitting in their usual spot). All was well in the end and we enjoyed our lunch before heading back home via Ingatestone.

6th January – Rochford to Paglesham - As this was an easy ride and only up the road from Shoeburyness, I decided to have a lie in and got to “The Beehive” café at 10.35am, where I found Ken W & Peter H. No sooner had I ordered and sat down, the first group from Wickford arrived. As Lynda C was making her way through the narrow opening into the parlour, she encountered an immovable object in the shape of John S and I feared there was trouble ahead. Luckily, as John is currently the President of the EMG he graciously gave way and calm descended. We were joined by Shaun Whelan from Ipswich who had met John in Eastwood and gone to the start in Wickford in order to put the miles in. A steady stream of SEG’s arrived up to 11.25am, when Paul H & Dave W appeared, which made 25 in total. It was at this point that thirteen going onto “The Punchbowl” at Paglesham left (no offence intended). We were joined in the pub by Mike C (by bike) and Alan S (by car). Martin P had ridden out on an old style sit-up-and-beg 1950’s Raleigh with rod brakes.

13th January – Blackmore to West Hanningfield - Fourteen brave souls left Wickford on a particularly cold morning and headed out for the “Blackmore Tearooms” in two groups, where we were meeting up with members from Havering CTC MG. My group arrived at 11am and found John H & Graham D already there. The remaining group arrived at 11.30am and a little later four from Havering appeared.

Seven went on with 2 from Havering to the “Three Compasses” at West Hanningfield, where Peter Walker caught us up and we were joined by Lynda C, who had been test-driving a 4x4. **Manchurian**

20th January – Great Baddow to Bicknacre CANCELLED DUE TO SNOW



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27th January – Brentwood to Ramsden Heath (Webbed feet would have been useful!) - The sudden arrival of mild weather meant this was a well-attended ride. A combination of overnight rain and the snow melting made it obvious it would be wet in places.

Two groups left Wickford led by Ian M and Peter W on completely different routes but both had local floods to contend with on the way to Brentwood. After elevenses at “The Café in the Park”, the riders left as one group, but near Padham’s Green there was a dispute over what was the driest route, which resulted in a split of riders. In the end, at different times, we all ended up at a flood on Stock Road just down from Ingatestone. One car was just being pushed out as my group of five arrived so we knew we were in for wet feet time! We turned up at the “Nags Head” a full half hour before the main party. John and Sue arrived by car to join us. This was probably the largest number to do lunch for a long time. Peter H turned up, as we were leaving having gone on a grand tour to avoid water. We think his aversion to floods is because of his small stature! **Mel Martin**

3rd February – Rettendon to North Fambridge - The Lodge Country Inn was our elevenses destination this morning and sixteen set off from Wickford in two groups. My group went via Brock Hill and on approaching the junction of Hawkswood Road and Downham Lane came upon the scene of an accident involving a cyclist, who had come off her bike due to skidding on the gravel. An ambulance was arriving, as we went by and a number of motorist’s were helping at the scene. So we didn’t need to stop. We took Lower Stock Road to West Hanningfield and then proceeded down Middlemead, some at a faster pace than others. It was here that Lynda & Colin adopted ‘the rhythm or cadence method’ of cycling rather than the ‘sprinting method’ of Phil (I’ll leave you to ask them how to describe it!). From South Hanningfield Road we turned right onto Chalk Street and then continued along Hoe Lane before proceeding to the Turnpike and taking Woodham Road to Hayes Chase and “The Lodge”.

During breakfast the landlady at the “Ferryboat Inn” got in touch to say that they’d had a gas leak and had no heating and it was decided by the group to head for the “Brewer’s Arms” at Bicknacre instead and we got there just before 1pm. After lunch we made our respective ways home and four stopped at the “Haybarn Café” in Battlesbridge for tea and buns.

Manchurian

10th February – Chelmsford to Mundon - 9 turned out today, half went via Stock & Writtle with Peter W, the remaining dregs came with me on your suggested route. Many thanks for the crib sheet, it worked fine. We didn't get lost and arrived very shortly after the 'fast riders'. No one fancied going on to lunch being cold and wet so we slunk home with tail between legs. (Made pedalling hard). **Phil Notley**

Forthcoming Events



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

Date	Event	Organiser
28th Apr	[MG] Witham 150km or 200km , Starting from: Woodham Mortimer , Chelmsford	Ed Nevard 07752 305 476
12 th May	[EMG] 80km - Dot Sharp Memorial Ride , Starting from: Mountnessing, Church Hall	Adrian Leeds 01245 260272

If not stated, please see the *Impressum* (p. 4) for organisers' contacts or see our website at <http://www.essexcycling.co.uk/events.htm>.

DAJ

Easy Rider Meets



Date	Pub	Destination
14 th Apr	"Queen Victoria"	Woodham Walter
12 th May	Ingatestone & Fryerning Community Centre	

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

Essex CTC Individual and Inter-Group Competitions

by Essex CTC Committee

Points for Essex CTC Member Group members (Havering MG, Chelmsford MG, Southeast MG, and Colchester IMG) starting/successfully completing events are accumulated alongside points awarded for members organising and marshalling at events, and writing articles for Spotlight. The Member Group with the highest number of points at end of the year/season is awarded the

"Essex CTC Inter-Group Challenge Shield"

For 2013 there are **8** cycling events and **2** social events:-

Date	Event	CTC TC*	IG Comp.
24 th Feb	SEG's 75		✓
28 th Apr	Witham 150km or 200km	✓	✓
12 th May	80km	✓	✓
30 th June	Windmill Rides	✓	✓
14 th July	100M / 100km	✓	✓
11 th Aug	Colchester 40/40		✓
8 th Sept	Rough Stuff (29M)	✓	✓
29 th Sept	Colchester 100		✓
28 th July	Summer Gathering		✓
15 th Dec	Christmas Meet		✓

* Tourist Competition (see CTC web site for details)

At the end of the year/season, Individual awards based on number of events successfully completed are available to individual Essex CTC MG members as follows:-

Out of 8 cycling events:		Certificates for each event successfully completed are awarded to CTC members from within and outside of the Essex area. For Essex CTC members the Standard and Premier Awards and Certificates (recording each event successfully completed by the individual) are presented at the Essex CTC AGM.
Complete 4	Standard Award	
Complete 5 with at least one event of 100 miles or more	Premier Award	

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

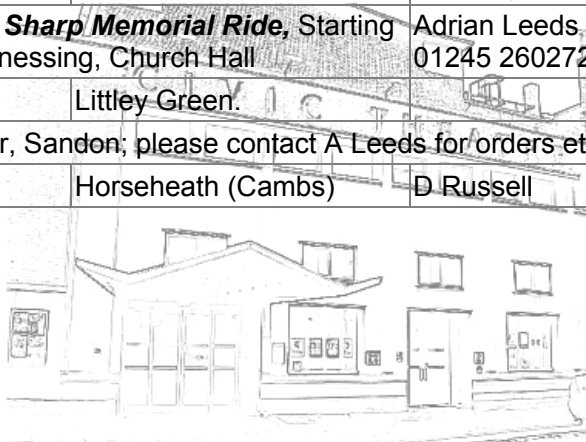
Rides Start: Sundays: Bus Station at the end of Fairfield Road
(near the Civic Theatre) 9am for 9.15am

All day rides start **9.15am**

For Tuesday evening destinations

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

Date	11ses	Destination	Leader
17 Mar	Coggeshall (Dutch Nursery)	Ford Street	A Leeds
24 Mar	Shalford Church End	Castle Hedingham	A Leeds
31 Mar	Blue Egg	Widdington	M Cockersole
07 Apr	Rayne	Gosfield	J & B Taylor
14 Apr	Hatfield Heath	Widford (E. Herts)	D Southin
21 Apr	[MG] Spring Tour	Park Hotel, Diss, Norfolk	D Russell
Alt:	Informal Ride		
28 Apr	[MG] Witham 150km or 200km , Starting from 8.00 from Woodham Mortimer, Chelmsford		Ed Nevard 07752 305 476
Alt:	Perrywood, Copford		
05 May	Hastingwood	Spellbrook	D Emery
12 May	[EMG] 80km - Dot Sharp Memorial Ride , Starting at 9.30 from Mountnessing, Church Hall		Adrian Leeds, 01245 260272
Alt:	Andrewsfield,	Littley Green.	
14 May	[MG] Social Supper, Sandon; please contact A Leeds for orders etc.		
19 May	Finchingfield	Horseheath (Cambs)	D Russell



Havering Member Group – Runs List



Secretary: Stephen Ingall

ctchavering@gmail.com or ☎ 07890 386984

www.ctchavering.btck.co.uk & www.essexcycling.co.uk

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

All rides meet Sunday 08:45 for 09:00 start unless otherwise stated

Date	Destination	Leader
17 th Mar	Gilston, The Moor Hen	
24 th Mar	Epping Forest for 11ses; Hastingwood for Lunch	Stephen Ingall
31 st Mar	Pub Lunch, Writtle near Chelmsford	
7 th Apr	All-comers ride	
14 th Apr	Leigh-on-Sea (40m)	Gordon Peel
21 st Apr	Historic North Weald Railway Station for 11ses; Hatfield Broadoak for Lunch	Stephen Ingall
27 th Apr	Ride to Witham with overnight Stay TBC. See website	
28 th Apr	[MG] Witham 150km or 200km , Starting from 8.00 from Woodham Mortimer, Chelmsford	Ed Nevard 07752 305 476
5 th May	All-comers ride	
12 th May	[EMG] 80km - Dot Sharp Memorial Ride , Starting at 9.30 from Mountnessing, Church Hall	Adrian Leeds 01245 260272
19 th May	Papermill Lock with SEG CTC - meet as usual	Stephen Ingall

All-comers ride –

Catering to new cyclists;
regular members can continue
for full ride as normal

* = Destination to be decided on the day

The group out on a bright sunny winter's day



South East Essex Member Group – Runs List



Secretary: John Steer

☎ 01702 529 638– e-mail segsssec@btinternet.com

Runs start: from the Market Café in Woodlands Road, Wickford SS12 0AL,
Sundays at 9.15am for 9.30am, unless otherwise stated.
Club Nights are the 2nd & 4th Friday of the month
8.00pm @ St Laurence & All Saints Church Hall,
Eastwoodbury Lane, Eastwood, SS2 6RH

Date	Eleveneses	Destination for Lunch
March 2013		
17 th	Great Baddow (Bringey Pine)	Danbury (The Cricketer's)
24 th	Writtle (Hanging Gardens Garden Centre Cafe)	Littley Green (The Compasses)
31 st	Mundon (The Roundbush) Easter Sunday	Nounsley (The Sportsman)
April 2013		
7th	Rettendon (BHN Garden Centre)	North Fambridge (Ferryboat Inn)
14th	Norton Heath (Transport Café)	Ongar (The Cock)
21st	[MG] Shotley Peninsula , Suffolk	Car-assisted: Ian Mather
Alt:	Chelmsford (Secret Garden Tearooms)	*see note
28th	[MG] Witham 150km or 200km , Starting from 8.00 from Woodham Mortimer, Chelmsford	
		Ed Nevard 07752 305 476
Alt:	Bunsay Down (Golf Club)	Kelvedon (Railway Tavern)
May 2013		
5th	Sutton Hall (Shopland Hall Equestrian Centre)	Great Wakering (Red Lion)
12th	[EMG] 80km - Dot Sharp Memorial Ride , Starting at 9.30 from Mountnessing, Church Hall	
		Adrian Leeds 01245 260272
Alt:	Maldon (Morrisons)	Tolleshunt D'arcy (Queen's Head)

Note: * When **EMG** or **MG** events take place, the local ride will include a booked Eleveneses venue, but not a specific pub for lunch, unless otherwise stated. This will enable members to make their own choice.

Check out www.velocipede.org.uk for GPX and TrackLogs TCX files of our rides.

Colchester Informal Member Group – Runs List



Secretary: Alan Palmer
 ☎ 01206 792929, mob 07939 395067 or
alanpalmer@phonecoop.coop
 All rides meet Leisure World Container
 by Skatepark at 9-30am

Date	11ses	Destination	Leader
Mar 17	Coggeshall, Dutch Nursery	Goldhanger, Chequers	Alan Palmer
Mar 24	Boxted Fillpots	Stutton Gardners Arms	Alan Palmer
Mar 31	TBA	TBA	TBA
Apr 7	Stanway, Barnplants	Edwardstone, White Horse	Alan Palmer
Apr 14	Aldham, Millrace	Long Melford, Bizzi Beans	Alan Palmer
Apr 21	Tiptree	Coggeshall, Dutch Nursery	Paul & Caroline Avison
Apr 28	[MG] Witham 150km or 200km , Starting from 8.00 from Woodham Mortimer , Chelmsford		Ed Nevard 07752 305 476
Alt:	Aberton Visitor Center	Mersea Island Vineyard	Pam Nelson
May 5	Coggeshall, Dutch Nursery	Rayne Booking Hall café	Alan Palmer
May 12	[EMG] 80km - Dot Sharp Memorial Ride , Starting at 9.30 from Mountnessing, Church Hall		Adrian Leeds 01245 260272
Alt:	Stanway Barnplants	Wickham St Pauls Farm Shop	TBA

Note:

Since the *Colchester CTC Informal Member Group* has its roots in the “Cycle Champions”, bikes, helmets, etc. can be provided free of charge.

Members are welcome to attend Bike Drinks, for all local cyclists, held on the 3rd Monday of the month, 8pm at “The New Inn”, Chappel St South (CO2 7AX).

Check our website for further information: www.colchesterctc.co.uk



The New Inn, Colchester

Youth Hostel rides in the 60s

By Dave Kisby

I now live in Basildon, but my cycling history is centred on Chelmsford, where I lived from 1943 to 2000.

Youth Hostels were an indispensable part of weekend and holiday excursions during my halcyon cycling days in the 60's. I joined the YHA in 1959, becoming a life member in 1962. Souvenirs include about 40 badges showing youth hostels of that era; 1960 and 1964 YHA handbooks; a few postcard photographs of hostels visited. Also my card, the pages being stamped with the name and / or picture of each hostel. If anyone is interested in YHA history they are welcome to have a look. Contact me on davidkisby@btinternet.com or 01268 282648.

There were several hostels within evening reach of Chelmsford, examples being Maldon, Hockley, Harlow, Castle Hedingham, High Roding, Saffron Walden and Colchester. Some club weekend rides would start on a Friday evening with a stay at a 'short distance' hostel, giving a good start for the next two days.

Hostels within a comfortable weekend ride were so numerous that I don't wish to list them all here. Some favourite club destinations for Saturday night were in Kent: Kemsing, Doddington, Twyssenden Manor [Goudhurst] and Canterbury. The Tilbury/Gravesend Ferry was invaluable in those days. I believe the service is somewhat infrequent now ...or has it ceased altogether? A Suffolk favourite was Naughton Mill YH near Bildeston. The old railway station YH at Thetford, Norfolk was unique: we slept in the ex waiting room or booking office. Stays at Houghton Mill YH in Huntingdonshire offered swimming and boating. This mill was leased to the YHA by the National Trust, who took it back some years ago and have refurbished it with new machinery. It is featured in this year's NT handbook on page 193.

I must mention Easter tours. Hostels were booked well in advance. They were always busy with cyclists and walkers enjoying the first long break after Christmas. Various Easter rides took Chelmsford groups to hostels at Malvern, Welsh Bicknor, Norleywood [New Forest], Whitwell [I.O.W] and Hartington [Peak District] to name a few.

Continued on page 23

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Fortnight YH club journeys were, for example, Eire in 1961 [train to Holyhead]; Lands End and back in 1962.

A final snippet: one Friday afternoon in autumn 1964, David Foster, my brother Gordon and myself set out for Kemsing YH. Just for a change we took the Dartford Tunnel route instead of Tilbury Ferry, arriving at the cycle transport point at about 7pm. Traffic was, of course, so much lighter then and we were invited [yes, invited] to cycle through the tunnel. "Just keep in single file lads". Has anyone else amongst the vintage set had this 'privilege'? 🚲

SEG's 75 – 2013 Event's Report

by Stefan Eichenseher

For this year's event, there had been quite a huge amount of advertising gone out. Nonetheless, I received just 12 pre-entries. Considering the history of the event, I was expecting the crowds flowing in on the day.

And there they were. In total 66 people made it onto the paid-up list. 5 did not pick up their check card, 17 did not finish and 11 were out of the time, within which they wanted to complete the ride.

Although the event took place two weeks later than last year, the cold was one of the main contributors to fewer than anticipated riders attending. Many might also have been discouraged by the forecast. In the end, the weather at the start was quite ok, but cold. Riders reported heavy head- and cross-winds in the open stretches up to Great Bardfield with a nice tail wind on the way back.

A big thank you is due to the marshals, who braved the cold and stood the ground in their positions. It was probably very much due to the weather conditions that some of the racers did not stop, when passing by.

It so came that I had the first group back at 12:42. They admitted to have been the first ones out at 8:30, so not quite (not at all) conforming to the idea of the fastest groups starting last. But with just under 4 ¼ hours they were definitively faster than doing the round by car!

I hope that all participants enjoyed the day and that I might see you again next year. 🚲

He, who would valiant be - continued

By Chris Mills

On Thursday morning, our breakfast was fairly basic and when we set off at 8.30 it was seriously cold, on the first downhill we were perished. We stopped at a market to buy fruit from a fabulous array before rolling on to Villanueva where we stopped to look at the amazing stork nests on the church and did our good deed for the day by helping an old lady who was struggling home with a huge bundle of firewood. Down the Orbigo valley, we saw what looked like hops growing, a bit



Amazing stork nests in Villanueva

unexpected in Spain, and then crossed the river on the Roman bridge at Hospital de Orbigo. It was then mainly main road to the old town of Astorga, approached by a fierce front-wheel-lifting climb but rewarded by picnic lunch including squid in black ink sauce in the square. After looking at the cathedral, the Gaudi palacio and the Roman mosaics we left by a minor road which climbed into the Montes de Leon. It was good to be off the hot plain again and see trees and picturesque old villages set just off the road.

Mark and I took a little detour to Turienza, which was a very pretty village spread around a big green and having a strange church with a big arch leading up to the tower. The final climb to Rabanal was steep and rough and for the first time I felt



somewhat knackered as we joined the others for beers in the courtyard at the Pasada de Gaspar. This was one of the best places we stayed in, big airy well equipped rooms and a super 3 course meal for 10 euros, this after 53 miles.

Off again at 8.30 we were straight onto the long ascent, which eventually took us to 1500 metres and the big iron cross surrounded by a small mountain of stones. Pilgrims carry stones up the climb and throw them onto the pile to cast off their sins, so we chucked a few big ones on.

Here we met Enrique our Spanish friend from Belorado, he had looked wrecked, but he was still continuing while his teenage son had gone home, as it was too tough for him. The descent was steep and bumpy, but there were great views and we then stopped for coffee in the narrow street of El Acete and discussed making a detour to see a water powered forge described in the book as one



of Spain's finest industrial relics. Charles and Alan decided not to go, but the rest of us duly turned off and began to descend. Mark assured us that it wasn't much further according to his GPS and we had committed ourselves, so down we went. Eventually we got to the bottom and walked some way through the woods to the forge, which turned out to be no more than a few derelict sheds, so we returned to the bikes to face the return climb. Mark set off saying he would be slowest and while I was having a snack and drink to fortify myself, Bully also left.

At this point I broke a tooth on a nut and set off feeling a bit daunted, particularly when I felt totally trashed by the first of many hairpin bends. It was now ferociously hot and I felt as bad as I've ever felt on a bike, wondering if I'd even make it, but eventually I saw Mark ahead and we dragged ourselves to the top. Fortunately, there was then a long descent to Molinaseca where Charles and Alan were relaxing by the river. It had been dammed to make it suitable for swimming, so as we ate our lunch, including local manchego cheese, we were able to watch the village young ladies swimming. It was now very, very hot and we progressed to Ponferrada, which wasn't special but had a castle and some narrow old streets and a pleasant square, where we had a drink. We left using a mixture of road and the Camino path to Cacabelos and then another climb. When we reached the top and went to take on water we found Bully sitting by the fountain practicing his mouth organ! Finally, we descended to Villafranca, through its narrow streets to the modern Hotel San Francisco, which had a nice young lady to welcome us, and a garage for the bikes. In the evening the square was very busy, as we got nearer to Santiago, the pilgrim numbers increased and so did the places

catering for them. We drank with Enrique and his friend before eating a slightly disappointing meal. Before bed I went to the old gateway and chapel where in times past pilgrims, who were too ill to cross the mountains ahead of us could complete their pilgrimage before expiring. Not a good omen. I must have been too tired to note down the mileage.

Continued in the next issue

Useful Website Links

Essex CTC Member Group	www.essexcycling.co.uk
Cyclists' Touring Club	www.ctc.co.uk
Chris' site: route planning resources	www.velocipede.org.uk
Yet Another Cycling Forum	http://yacf.co.uk/forum/index.php
Our Advertisers' websites	
	(a to z)
API Resprays (Cycle Shop)	www.apibikes.com
Basildon Timber (Decking & Timber)	www.basildontimber.com
Chris Regan Ltd (Accountant)	www.chrisregan.co.uk
Ciclos Uno (Cycle Shop)	www.ciclosuno.com
Cycle Cellar (Cycle Shop)	www.cyclecellar.co.uk
Herongate Cycles (Cycle Shop)	www.herongatecycles.com
Hopleys Garden Long Barn (Café)	www.hopleys.co.uk
Kings Road Cycles (Cycle Shop)	www.shedbornbikes.com
Megarry's Antiques and Teashop (Café)	www.megarrysteashop.co.uk
Richardson Cycles (Cycle Shop)	www.richardsonscycles.co.uk
The Cycle & Toy Centre (Cycle Shop)	www.thecyclecompany.co.uk
The Prince of Wales (Pub)	www.thepow.co.uk

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