

**November / December 2017**



ST. MARY'S CHURCH, STOKE BY NAYLAND

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"Essex Photo Show", ourpasthistory.com; image acquired on 18/12/2008

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**Spotlight** – Magazine of the Essex CTC MG, a local Member Group of Cycling UK (formerly the Cyclists' Touring Club), the national cyclists' organisation

President: Dave Rowlands

Volume 6/2017se53

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Closing date for the January / February 2018 edition is on **15 December 2017**.

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

## Officers of the Essex CTC MG - we are serving you ...

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	Brian Taylor	☎ 01277 657867	Delegate
Colchester	Alan Palmer	☎ 01206 792929	Secretary
	Pam Nelson	☎ 07812 209862	Delegate
Havering	Dave Rowlands	☎ 020 3663 4345	Secretary
	Alex Kornfeld	alexkornfeld@me.com	Delegate
South East Essex	John Steer	☎ 01702 529638	Secretary
	Jon Collins	☎ 01245 320733	Delegate

### Other Committee members

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### Certificate of Merit Committee

Brian Penny, John Steer, Martin Cockersole

### Essex CTC MG Trustees

Stefan Eichenseher, John Steer, Brian Penny

## **Editor's Foreword**

At our last committee meeting before the AGM, we were discussing a range of issues (as we usually do and should – it's the get-together of the heads of your MG's, for as much as they are present). Amongst other items advertising took a place there and Mr T suggested a leaflet for everyone to hand out. There had been an A5-page that you could copy and forward before. On pages 28 and 29 you find an extended version including the Order details. I have put it in, so that you can copy onto A4, and either fold it, or put it up-side-down into the printer/copier to get two leaflets on one A4.

Have you seen the **Forthcoming Events** chapter? Is there something missing, or has the organiser forgotten to notify me?

Well, I do hope your group secretaries / representatives have read the minutes of the last committee meeting, and advised you of the possibly ensuing changes. And these are huge: due to other priorities taking precedence, resulting in the lack of volunteers, there is a considerable number of events possibly going to be taken out of the Events Calendar for 2018.

The Windmill Rides remain, so you still have an opportunity to stretch your legs over 110km or 200km during a Sunday in the summer holidays.

A more seasonal subject:

It's not too late for your Christmas decoration crafting, so if you've got any spare chain links, you could have a go at the example on page 14. Else, a quicker option is on the next page – just drop the whole cassette into a jar with degreaser and then remove the rivets that keep the lot together.

Right, so, that leaves me to say – as always – those who are fit go forth and cycle. I hope that you are all out and about and have fun on your bikes!

Your editor,  
**Stefan Eichenseher**



## ***The President's Piece***


The summer is definitely over, the days of melting tarmac just a memory! As the days and our rides get shorter, just put another layer on and carry on.

By the time you read this the Member Groups' and the Essex AGM's will be done and dusted for another year and the events season will start all over again. Use them or lose them!

The Christmas hostilities will soon be upon us and the groups will be organising their Christmas lunches. Don't forget about the Essex CTC Christmas meet at "The Fox and Hounds", Cock Clarks, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December where all the groups get together.

So on with the long sleeves and don't slip on them autumn leaves! May the p\*\*\* fairy leave you alone, and the wind be behind you for another year!

***Dave Rowlands***  
*Presidente*

***"Fun" from the***  *: ... found on my travels through the Internet.*  
***[Ed]:***

Now you know what to do with your spare sprockets!





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## **Member Groups' Reports**

### **Chelmsford Member Group**

**10 September 17, Charity Ride – Foulness Island** - Thorpe Bay Rotary Club have been running this annual ride around the otherwise off-limits Foulness Island for some time. For the last couple of years, they have allowed participants to raise money for their elected charity. I now work for *Red Balloon of the Air*, an educational charity providing academic and therapeutic programmes for children who have experienced trauma resulting in non-attendance at school. Based in Essex, I manage our provision in the county, teach online and support the face-to-face recovery of children who attend our satellite centre at *The Notleys Golf Club*, a popular stop-off for some of the local mid-week groups with which some readers of this blog (<https://chelmsfordcityctc.wordpress.com/>) also ride.

As I worked for 10 years at Thorpe Hall School, not far from the official start/finish point of the island ride near Great Wakering, I became used to the summertime commutes to and from work – for the most part in busy mid-week traffic. During rush hour, these are not the most pleasant of roads Essex has to offer, especially due to Rettendon Roundabouts Rage. However, I decided to resurrect that route last ridden a few years ago and ride to and from the start point. This would make a total distance, with the 23 miles around the island, of ca. 75 miles which, although not a massive distance, I thought seemed a little more respectable to add to my sponsorship page.

There is a choice of Hanningfields to pick up the old A130 rise to Rettendon, and I opted for the gentle drag up to Butts Green and East Hanningfield to warm up. Setting off at 8am, I was too early for the road race mentioned on Mel's ride, but all the preparations were in full swing and other more competitive types were warming up more vigorously than me in anticipation of the racing to come. Once over the Turnpike and Hawk Hill roundabouts, the roads via Hullbridge, Rochford and the Wakerings are pan-flat and certainly quieter and more pleasant than on weekday mornings.

The start/finish point was "Cupids Country Club", where very helpful and friendly Rotary Club volunteers, including one or two friends from the school, were checking us in and generally pointing us in the right direction. I understand over 1000 cyclists took part throughout the day, but with half-hourly phased start times to avoid overcrowding. Simple refreshments were available, although the coffee was of the 'brown-grit-in-a-styrofoam' variety.

So what of the island itself? Most of the non-military 'action' takes place at the aptly-named Churchend at the far end. The road to get on and off was straight and exposed, as you might expect, with various checkpoints and rather ominous signs about the current UK terror threat level at regular intervals. The reminders of the military nature of the island were never far away in any sense. But the island is also home to some 150(?) residents. Some of the land (and marshes beyond) are often scattered with weapons, which in tests - we hope - are rather smaller in scale than the more infamous shows of strength elsewhere in the world. But other areas of the island seem peacefully rural, with the village nestling among open, arable farmland.

The 4-mile circuit beyond Churchend village started with the same smooth tarmac as that which forms the spine of the island. However, after a couple of 90 degree turns and waves to children watching the spectacle from their garden gates, the terrain changed to gravel, some soft mud and puddles. Complete with strengthening headwind, this wasn't exactly the pavé of Paris-Roubaix, but the same skills of relaxed vigilance, maintaining momentum and letting a road bike find its own natural line were necessary. One or two of those who visibly tensed up struggled a bit, and with worry etched on faces, there were a couple of spills, but nothing serious. There were several broom wagons and volunteers/first aiders dotted all around the route, so risks were managed very well and the emphasis on safe enjoyment could be maintained.

I did the recommended 3 loops of 4 miles, caught up with the school caretaker who was supporting by bringing the minibus as a very brightly-coloured support vehicle, then headed back down what for some had become the long walk to freedom. Freedom took a while coming for me too, as by now the wind had really got up and was doing its best to blow us escapees back the way we'd come. Cue 15 minutes of head-down effort, punctuated by cheery waving, as I saw the happy, smiling faces still coming the other way on cheap, steel mountain bikes effortlessly pedalling towards the village. Inside, I was thinking, 'You wait!'

No photography is allowed on the island, but here I am with my medal (a reward for the triumph against the headwind, if nothing else). As well as that recent effort, the fixed grin also masks the pain of 2 minutes previously, when, having leant my bike against the barrier and turned around, a considerable gust blew it straight back the other way, with all its steely weight transferred from top tube to midway up my left thigh. After a little recovery time, though, I put in a quick loop around North Shoebury (to make the total miles up to 75) and took it gently on the way home with a

steadily increasing wind and a couple of short, sharp and squally showers for company.

I can thoroughly recommend this ride: it's well-organised, easy cycling, for all my histrionic hyperbole, and a good opportunity to see a quirky little part of Essex that would otherwise be inaccessible. **Phil**

**19 September 2017, Ride to Elsenham and Monk Street** - The *Farleigh Hospice charity ride* had no doubt had its impact on our group but only 4 riders set off on our scheduled ride led by John B. The weather was chilly and dull with the overnight mist having lifted into low cloud.

The ride to Elsenham Golf was along familiar roads which were busy with cyclists. Just after High Roding we were overtaken by a swarm of Essex Roads riders which was slightly intimidating. As one passed me he said "sorry mate" – I'm not quite sure what he had done but it was a nice touch!

Near Great Canfield two of the charity event riders were dealing with a puncture. As we passed we asked, if they were OK but they were not. They had no spare tubes and no pump, just two gas canisters which had both been used. After supplying a tube and a pump, they were back on the road and we continued to Elsenham.

At elevenses some debate took place about the original lunch destination, "Wendens Ambo" and we all agreed to head for Monk Street instead. The pub there is great – good beer, friendly reception and the sort of snack food we like at lunchtime.

After another debate we agree "Rayne station" as the tea stop. By this time the sun was out and the world was a much nicer place. The route was via Lindsell, Lubberhedges Lane and for Dave R and me a good stretch on the Flitch Way. John and Dave S chose the road route, but we arrived simultaneously at the tea stop.

Back at Chelmsford my computer showed about 57 miles. **Martin Cockersole**

**15th October 2017, Five go to the seaside** - As this ride was into a busy sector of Essex I wasn't sure how many riders would turn up, but like the title says five of us left Chelmsford on a beautiful sunny morning. Our elevenses stop was at the "Riverview Nursery" at Hockley, where Norman L met us. After refreshments Phil returned home so we still had five going onto lunch.

At Canewdon we walked through the churchyard for a quick look at the church and village lock-up before making a detour to see the old radar

site. Not much can be seen from the road but Dave R said he remembered the wooden masts, which were part of the receiver. The transmitter masts were of steel and the one at Gt Baddow came from this site.

To avoid a busy section around Rochford I took the group off-road round the remains of the old Stambridge Mill.

Lunch was taken at "Parsons Barn" at Shoebury. This is a Wetherspoon's and was remarkably quiet for a Sunday. Moving on we had a couple of culture stops in the old Shoebury Garrison, now all private residences. The sea front cycle path is about 4.5 miles long and requires no navigation input just collision avoidance tactics. Around the pier entrance we were down to a crawl and with hindsight we should have got on the road and mixed in with the cars.

Our return was via Leigh and along beside a noisy A127 until we got to Rayleigh, where Norman went directly home. Along Rawreth Lane we met Brian Penny making his way home after a SEG ride. Three of us stopped at the "Haybarn Tea Room" in Battlebridge for a top up of tea. Most places close at 4:00 on a Sunday, but I knew this one stayed open to 4:30.

I think the other riders enjoyed this ride as something different, but it has two main problems, distance and traffic. Chelmsford to Chelmsford was about 65-70 miles and this could have been reduced, but there is little that can be done about the traffic. The Southend Section of Forty Plus has a similar ride, but the traffic levels are different on Thursdays. **Mel Martin**

## **Colchester Member Group**

17 September 2017

*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness*

*Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun*

A misty start, for sure, with quiet peddling through the western suburbs of a sleepy Colchester. Most things seemed damp with a modest layer of dew on the bikes and the roads. The cycle paths were newly festooned with the first falling leaves of the new season.

Ashley led us to our first stop at Kelvedon. We were a small group today, with some of the regulars getting ready for the London –Paris ride and others taking late season holidays. The café, too, was unexpectedly quiet although we were joined by Shelley and then Simon.

Onward, through the Notleys, Fairstead and Terling. We were flying, the roads rolling by seemingly effortlessly under our wheels. The mist had long gone and the odd shaft of sunlight shone through the light clouds. It was exhilarating, liberating riding as we headed on over the A12 and down to Paper Mill Lock.

It's such a lovely site and we were able to sit out with our toasties, watching the locks close and open. The young signets were floating by, gimlet eyes open for leftovers. A slice of cake put me on a sugar high which lasted all the way back to Colchester – I have no idea what was in it, but I'm having it next time, thank you nicely.

We headed back on a route that illogically seemed more uphill than down; through Wickham Bishops (getting more upmarket by the hour) and then the open countryside around Layer. Lovely though this was, the vistas showed us the extent of the storm clouds gathering – inevitably just over where we were headed.

'Do you want to go up Friday Woods Hill?' asked Ashley, trying to find a quicker route to avoid the worst of it all. Worth a try, but the top of the hill was just where it hit us. Raindrops like spears, a road awash, unseen potholes lying in wait and brakes (of course) taking temporary leave of absence. But it lifted and we started to steam gently as we pedalled onwards through the outskirts of Colchester.

A brief soaking, I suppose, but close enough to home that it didn't matter. A great day's ride with good company, good cycling and – oh yes – that cake..... **Janet Bettle**

## **Havering Member Group**

**August 6<sup>th</sup>** - Alan, Wendy, Chan plus five newbies (Andy, Gabrielle, Steve, Glen and Jim) led by Gordon headed for Mucking. Steve left us at Bulphan and Gabrielle appeared to be struggling so group split with Gordon taking Gabrielle and Andy back to Upminster and the rest carried on. Alan punctured at Horndon-On-The-Hill, then on to Mucking.

Uneventful return covering 32 Miles.

**August 13<sup>th</sup>** - Seven led by Kelvin set off on a sunny ride to High Easter for lunch at "The Snug Café". The P..... Fairy struck Alan in a big way near Chelmsford on the way back with a huge split in his rear tyre, Alex with his emergency supply of Duct-tape to the rescue!

Back home without further incident!

*continued on page 19*

## Forthcoming Events



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

Date	Event	Organiser
10 Dec	<b>[EMG] Essex CTC Christmas Lunch,</b> "The Fox and Hounds", Cocks Clark, 12pm	Brian Penny 01277 657867

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

## Christmas Drinkies Run- 10th December 2017

*By Brian Penny*

Don't forget the "**Christmas Drinkies**" ride on Sunday **10th December**

**2017.** Our pre-Christmas get-together will be at the usual venue of the "Fox and Hounds" pub at Cock Clarks. During recent visits there we were pleased to see that the landlord continues to have at least two real ales on tap (and often three) as well as a wide choice of food. Brian Penny (SEG's) will circulate a menu to MG contact points in good time to place an order. 🚲



## Nothing going on at New Year's Day?

If anyone wanted to join an old, nearly extinguished tradition of the *New Year's drinks* at "The Viper", Mill Green, then you can meet the SEG's for an outing there. 🚲

## Chelmsford Informal Member Group – Runs List

**Contact:** Adrian Leeds

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

**Runs Secretary:** John Beaumont:

5 Riddiford Drive, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 2GB, ☎ 01245 630864

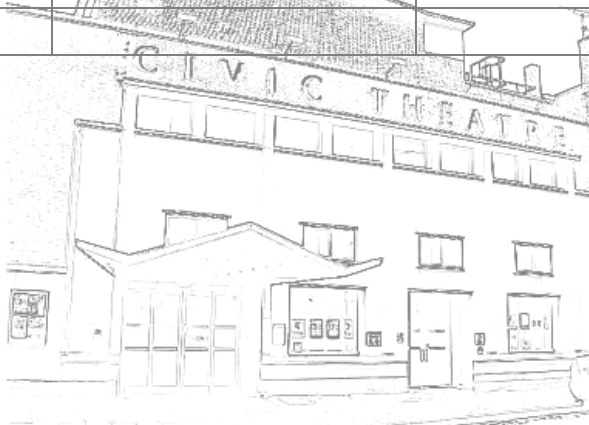
**Rides Start:** Sundays: Bus Station at the end of Fairfield Road  
(near the Civic Theatre) 9am for 9.15am

All day rides start **9.15am**

For Tuesday evening destinations

call Dave Russell ☎ 01245 381055

Date	11ses	Destination	Leader
Nov 12	Blake End, Timbers	Finchingfield Red Lion	D Russell
Nov 19	Bardfield, Blue Egg	Castle Hedingham	A Leeds
Nov 26	Rettendon, BHN	Maldon, Wetherspoon's	D Southin
Dec 03	Tiptree, Woodlands	Goldhanger	M Cockersole
Dec 10	<b>[EMG] Essex CTC Christmas Lunch,</b> "The Fox and Hounds", Cock Clarks, 12pm		Brian Penny 01277 657867
<b>ALT</b>	Blackmore Tea Rooms	Cock Clarks	D Russell
Dec 17	Cressing Temple	Copford - Alma	J Beaumont
Dec 24	Informal Ride		
Dec 31	Maldon, Fig Tree (if open)	Billericay, Wetherspoon's	M Cockersole
Jan 07	Blackmore Tea Rooms	Matching Tye	M Martin
Jan 14	BHN Rettendon	Purleigh, Bell	D Russell



## Haverling Member Group – Runs List



**Secretary:** David Rowlands

david\_rowlands@hotmail.co.uk or ☎ 07948 583979

**Promotions Officer:** Kelvin Dane

[kelvindane@live.co.uk](mailto:kelvindane@live.co.uk) or ☎ 07922 111790

[www.essexcycling.co.uk](http://www.essexcycling.co.uk) & [www.haverlingcycling.com](http://www.haverlingcycling.com)

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

All rides meet 8.45 for **9am START** unless otherwise stated

Date	Destination	Leader
Nov 12	The Garnon Bushes, Coopersale	Dave Rowlands
Nov 19	The Rainbow and Dove, Hastingwood	Dave Rowlands
Nov 26	Roding Hall Tea Rooms, High Roding	Dave Rowlands
Dec 03	To Be Decided	Alison Hunnisett 07944 705870
Dec 10	<b>[EMG] Essex CTC Christmas Lunch,</b> "The Fox and Hounds", Cock Clarks, 12pm	Brian Penny 01277 657867
	"Fox & Hounds" - Essex Christmas Social Meet	Dave Rowlands
Dec 17	<b>10am START</b> , To Be Decided	Wai 07956 236325
Dec 24	No Ride - <b>Merry Christmas !!!</b>	
Dec 31	<b>10am START</b> , The Viper, Mill Green	Dave Rowlands
Jan 07	<b>10am START</b> , To Be Decided	Alan Pine 07713 096303
Jan 14	<b>[MG] 12 Noon - Christmas</b> Dinner, Venue to be Decided	Dave Rowlands

### Note:

First Sunday of the month:  
Short half-day ride for those wanting a  
shorter or easier ride

The group out on a bright sunny winter's day





## Southeast Essex Informal MG – Runs List



**Contact:** John Steer

☎ 01702 529 638— [segssec@btinternet.com](mailto:segssec@btinternet.com)

**Runs start:** from the Wickford Café,  
3-5 The Broadway, Wickford SS11 7AD -  
Sundays at 8.45am for **9.00am (Dec-Mar)**,  
unless otherwise stated.

**Club Nights** are the 2<sup>nd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Friday of the month  
8.00pm @ St Laurence & All Saints Church Hall,  
Eastwoodbury Lane, Eastwood, SS2 6RH

**Note:** \* When **EMG** or **MG**  
events take place the local ride  
will include a booked Elevesnes  
venue, but not a specific pub for  
lunch, unless otherwise stated.

Find Garmin GPX and  
TrackLogs TCX files of our  
rides on [www.velocipede.org.uk](http://www.velocipede.org.uk)

Date	Eleveneses	Lunch Destination	
12-Nov	Billericay (Café Deli 37)	Stondon Massey (Bricklayer's Arms)	
19-Nov	Chelmsford (River Café)	West Hanningfield (Three Compasses)	
26-Nov	Woodham Walter (Bunsay Down GC)	Stow Maries (Prince of Wales)	
03-Dec	Langford (Museum of Power Café)	Little Totham (The Swan)	
10-Dec	<b>[EMG] Essex CTC Christmas Lunch,</b> "The Fox and Hounds", Cock Clarks, 12pm		Brian Penny 01277 657867
<b>ALT:</b>	Chelmsford (Kings Coffee House) 11 Moulsham Street	Xmas Meet, see above	
17-Dec	Margaretting (Saddlery)	Broads Green (Walnut Tree) <b>Bring own sandwiches</b>	
24-Dec	NO RIDE as it's Christmas Eve - <b>Merry Christmas !!!</b>		
31-Dec	Little Baddow (Paper Mill Lock)	Witham (Bottesford Court)	
<b>01-Jan 2018</b>	<b>10.15am for 10.30am start from Wickford Diner, High Street.</b>	Mill Green (The Viper)	
07-Jan	Butts Green (Garden Centre Café)	Billericay (Blue Boar) 39 High Street	
14-Jan	Maldon (Crispy Bacon Café) 26 The Street	Maldon (Rose & Crown) 109 High Street	

### Sunday Rides (weather permitting in winter months)

From the beginning of December until the end of March all rides will start at 9am to enable all full day riders to return safely before darkness falls.

➔ There will be no 9.30am rides.

### Mid-week Rides (weather permitting in winter months)

Wednesday at 10am for 10.30am start from Rettendon (BHN Garden Centre) for an informal ride to either a café or pub for lunch.

## Colchester Informal Member Group – Runs List

**Contact:** Alan Palmer

☎ 01206 792929, mob 07939 395067 or

[alanpalmer@phonecoop.coop](mailto:alanpalmer@phonecoop.coop)

All rides meet Leisure World Container by Skatepark at 9:30am

More information on [www.colchestercycling.uk](http://www.colchestercycling.uk)

Date	11ses	Destination	Leader
Nov 12	TBC	TBC	Simon Brooks
Nov 19	TBC	TBC	Ashley Ager
Nov 26	TBC	Heybridge Basin	Pete Finch
Dec 03	TBC	TBC	Gillian Walker
10-Dec	<b>[EMG] Essex CTC Christmas Lunch,</b> "The Fox and Hounds", Cock Clarks, 12pm		Brian Penny 01277 657867
ALT	Beth Chato Gardens Elmstead market	Lawford	Paul & Caroline Avison
Dec 17	Abberton Visiter Centre	FordSt Shoulder of Mutton	Des McCarron
Dec 24		Decide on the Day	
Dec 31	Coggeshall Clock Tower	Copford the Alma	Chris Behn

Please check the online runs-list ([www.colchestercycling.uk/runslist.html](http://www.colchestercycling.uk/runslist.html)) for the latest updates on destinations.

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

### Note:

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



The New Inn, Colchester

## ***Member Groups' Reports – cont'd.***

**August 20<sup>th</sup>** - Eight on a sunny ride to "Lake Meadows Café" for elevenses. On to The Hanningfields and the ups and downs of Radar Hill, Cold Norton then on to North Fambridge, where lunch at "The Ferry Boat Inn" was speedily served. John Wynstanly set off alone for a longer ride while the rest returned via Stock and Hutton. Another 62 Miles.

**August 27<sup>th</sup>** - Seven led by Kelvin took a short but hilly ride to Stapleford Aerodrome for late elevenses/early lunch in the sunshine. Air traffic accompanied the diners, then it was back home.

**September 3<sup>rd</sup>** - Allison Hunnisett's first ride as leader and nine made it to "Blackmore Tea Rooms" for early elevenses. Back home for a nice easy 25 Miles.

**September 10<sup>th</sup>** - A sad day for us. Nine riders including Ray Anthony (who had not cycled with us for about a year) set off for lunch at "The Lordship Tea Rooms", Writtle.

On the return Ray had a puncture, Gordon stayed to assist. A few miles later, at Nine Ashes, Ray collapsed with a suspected heart attack. He was taken to Basildon hospital, but sadly passed away that evening.

**September 17<sup>th</sup>** - A grey start for the five that went to "Blackmore Tea Rooms". Four carried on to Chignal St James for service without a smile (!) at "The Three Elms". At least the sun came out to brighten things up. The Havering's first visit and maybe the last, food was good, but the staff were a bit frosty!

Return via Writtle and Blackmore totting up fifty Miles.

**September 24<sup>th</sup>** - Nine left Upminster (including new rider Jeanette from Redbridge); one early return left eight to carry on. After crossing swords with the Tilnar Challenge riders at Toot Hill we passed Magdalen Laver and Harlow Tye on way to our elevenses stop, "The Shed" at Sawbridgeworth.

Three set off for home while the rest set off on a loopy ride to Cammas Hall fruit farm for more refreshments.

John W did his usual thing and set off in search of more miles leaving four to carry on interrupted only by a visit from p..... fairy near Willingale!

## **South East Essex Informal Member Group**

**13<sup>th</sup> Aug - Billericay** - As it was the Colchester 40/40 and peak holiday season only five SEG's left Wickford heading for "Lake Meadows Café" in the Park by an extended route. Unfortunately, the café was heaving with runners preparing for a sponsored event and we decided to try the "PeaPod café" instead. It's very much geared up for families with young children and the choice of food was limited.

**20<sup>th</sup> Aug – Layer de la Haye** - Fourteen including three newcomers left Wickford for the "Braxted Bakery" where we arrived at 11.15am to find Lynda C and John S already tucking into their elevenses, as they'd ridden directly from South Woodham Ferrers. They left ahead of us as we had a long wait for food, as it was very busy. Eleven of the original 14 finally set off at 12.40pm, but due to the late departure the runs leader decided to change the destination to Little Totham and "The Swan". Brain P was especially happy, as he got to try the *Rosie Pig* cider.

**27<sup>th</sup> Aug – Broads Green** - Nineteen including 4 new lady riders set off in two groups for the "Saddlery" at Margaretting. Nine went onto the "Walnut Tree" where we met Ian C and Chloe. As this pub doesn't serve food we brought our own sandwiches.

**Wed, 20<sup>th</sup> Sep – Hatfield Peverel** - Tony B, Graham R and Paul H went to the "Peartree Pantry".

**24<sup>th</sup> Sep – Mill Green** - Seventeen set off from Wickford in two groups led by myself and Peter W. My group went via Sock and Mountnessing to Blackmore and Peter's via Galleywood, Margaretting and Highwood. Two riders decided to go to "Norton Heath café", as the tearooms were overwhelmed with cycling clubs (Islington, Gateway, Easterly, East London Velo and Hainault). Despite the numbers we didn't have to wait too long for our food. The longest wait was actually to use the toilet! Only four (Ian M, Tony B, Ron S and Jon C) continued onto "The Viper" for lunch.

**Wed, 29<sup>th</sup> Sep – Maldon** - Our small group was joined by John S and Jim C today and we had lunch in the "Rose and Crown", a Wetherspoon's pub.

**1<sup>st</sup> Oct - Witham** - As Peter W was away on an extended holiday down under it was left to me to lead nine to elevenses at "Paper Mill Lock". Our route included a ride along Twitty Fee in Danbury, which also has a junction with Hopping Jacks Lane and we've never cycled along it before. Only three went onto lunch and we did a loop of the Notleys (apparently Black Notley was where the plague was rife and White Notley was spared). We stopped at "Bottesford Court", another Wetherspoon's pub.

**Wed, 4<sup>th</sup> Oct – Hadleigh** - Only three out today (Ian M, Tony B and Graham R) and since we all originated in the Southend area we decided to go to Hadleigh Castle Country Park. Our route from BHN Garden Centre took us via Ramsden Heath, Billericay, Little Burstead, Dunton, Warley Heights, Dry Street, Vange, Pitsea and Thundersley. We had lunch in “The Hub café”, which is run by the Salvation Army and serves hot and cold food all reasonably priced. Afterwards we looked around the cycle shop where mountain bikes start from £2000 and upwards (not reasonably priced). We returned to our respective homes in Hockley, Southend and Shoeburyness via various routes.

**8<sup>th</sup> Oct – Little Green** - Thirteen headed out to “Loubees Tearoom” in the Hanging Garden Nurseries in Writtle and were later joined by John S and Lynda C who were given spurious directions to it by Writtle locals. Five went onto “The Compasses”, where I had soup unlike some who ate a whole huffer (mentioning no names).

**Wed, 11<sup>th</sup> Oct – Little Braxted** - The famous five (Ian M, Tony B, Graham R, Peter R and Paul H) set off on another rip roaring adventure to the “Braxted Bakery” for lunch. We went via East Hanningfield, Bicknacre, Gay Bowers, Runsell Green, Woodham Walter, Langford and Wickham Bishops. Unfortunately the tearoom was very busy with pre-booked customers and we found ourselves outside in the cold. As I neared home I had 75 miles on the clock and decided to put in various loops around Canewdon, Great Wakering and Southend to bring my total for the day to 101 miles.

**15<sup>th</sup> Oct – Mundon** - I lead a group of ten out through Rawreth, Battlesbridge, Rettendon, East Hanningfield and Downham to the “Hall & Co. Coffee Shop” in Ramsden Heath. Three lead by John S went up Brock Hill and via West Hanningfield and Stock. Two went to Cock Clarks to book the EMG Xmas lunch venue. Seven went to the “White Horse” where we enjoyed our reasonably priced sandwiches and baguettes washed down with *Day of the Triffids* ale. Our route home included the notorious Hagg Hill which at 16% is steeper than Brock Hill and was ably tackled by Jim C, Jon C, Emmanuel L, Graham R and Ron S).  
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## **Circumnavigating the Isle of Mull –cont'd**

*By Paula Rosewarne*

Tuesday 27th September 2016 –

### **Salen to Tobermory (34 miles)**

Awoken occasionally that night by bellowing stags in the forested hills around us - the sound of Mull! A grey, blustery and showery day, so it was with some trepidation that we loaded up our bikes and, as if on cue, the skies opened to give us a brief, but chilly rain shower. It passed quickly and we were soon retracing our route back across the neck of the island.

The enduring memory of this day is wind, plenty of it! The westerly wind was on our noses from the outset and when we emerged from the neck and turned onto the coast road it was even stronger. The first 7 miles were so tough and even a little scary at times with the strongest gusts feeling like they could knock us over. We stopped to look at the map, sprawling it out over the grass and securing it at all edges as the wind buffeted us. Fortunately, we were soon due to turn north and then east, so the wind would not be quite so in our faces. It is a lovely route, winding along the coast, though there were plenty of steep bits. As we turned inland slightly to cross over the high point before the descent into Calgary, I was feeling pretty exhausted and shaky. We stopped and had a bit of a rest, ate some cake and nuts, and then pressed on. There was a bit more of a climb, but it wasn't long before we reached a cairn at the top. I saw the cairn, remembered taking a photo there on a previous trip and in the following few seconds recalled the route I ridden from Calgary – it was all downhill from here, yippee!

Calgary beach looked as wonderful as before: a wide expanse of perfectly white sand met by turquoise water. We arrived at the café, cold but elated, and proceeded to eagerly devour the local specialities. We tarried there for quite a while having tea, but eventually we had to go out and face the wind, now strengthening even more it seemed, and the drizzle.

The next stage was tough. The stretch to Dervaig is not particularly hilly, but the steep and long climb out of Dervaig was punishing! The wind was so strong on top of the bleak moors that it was difficult to stay upright at times. Passing motorists must have been thinking we were slightly crazy. We passed Loch Torr (sadly no chance of fishing ~~in it~~, given the wind; though I had brought the fly rod because you can fish for trout for your dinner for £5 per day) and from there gradually descended. Once I saw the Mishnish lakes I knew we had done all the hard bit and it was an easy

descent into Tobermory and passed the water source for its whisky distillery on the way down, the smell of which envelopes the town most days.

The “Western Isles” hotel has a grand, slightly foreboding demeanour situated on the cliff overlooking the harbour and its much-photographed arc of colourful houses. There was log fire on the go and the scene was completed by plenty of dark wood furniture, tartan carpet and the inevitable stags’ heads mounted on most of the walls. Just time for a quick sherry enjoying the warmth of the fire for a while, then a windy walk down to “Café Fish” in the harbour.

“Café Fish” lived up to its glowing reputation. We splashed out on oysters to start, then salmon (for Sam) and tandoori fish kebabs for me, all washed down with a large glass of sauvignon blanc – perfect. The dessert was excellent too – berry pavlova.

Wednesday 28th September 2016 –

### **Tobermory to Craignure (20 miles)**

All was surprising calm when we awoke. The wind had subsided entirely and the harbour was like a mill pool. It was dreary and grey, but we could handle that; the wind was the main concern. We took breakfast in the large dining room overlooking the harbour and afterwards popped down to “Books and Tackle”, a brilliant Aladdin’s cave of a shop that does exactly what it says on the tin. I bought some more supplies of the tried and tested Blue Zulu and Stoats Tail flies - proven staples for loch trout fishing.

It was already raining quite convincingly by the time we were loading up our bikes, but there was nothing for it except just get on and do it. As it was, it turned out fine. There were a few big hills coming out of Tobermory and before long we were quite wet. But it wasn’t as unpleasant as expected, almost invigorating in one sense, free-wheeling down the hills with the spray in your face. The road surface is exceptionally good on this stretch and we covered the 10 miles to Salen in 55 mins. The island is beautiful, even in the mist and rain. The famous wooden boats of Salen and the dilapidated wooden pier looked really atmospheric against the still water and mist clad mountains in the distance. I spotted one seal hauled out on the rocks as we passed. We had a welcome break in Salen, enjoying a coffee and scone at the “Coffee Pot”. Then, before we got too cold, we set off for the final stretch to Craignure. It rained constantly and we arrived at the ferry terminal very wet, quite cold, but not in bad form at all – we had done it! We rushed for cover under the pedestrian walkway to wait for the ferry and a somewhat



soggy high five marked the end of the trip – one of our best cycle tours ever 😊.

**Total distance: 133 miles.** 🚲

## **Going Dutch: SEGs Late-Summer Cycling Tour, September 23rd – October 1st, 2017 – (or... Fiets don't fail me now!)\***

*By Martin Pipe*

Following a comfortable overnight ferry from Harwich, the three of us – Brian Penny, Gerald Turner (better known as 'Herman') and I – arrived in the Hook of Holland early one fresh Sunday morning. We proceeded north up the coastal path, after a brief diversion to The Hague, to the first night's stay in Haarlem. On the way, we stopped at picturesque seaside towns for food and drink (Gulpener, a refreshing beer served at a small restaurant, was particularly memorable). Being a Sunday, the paths and roads were shared between families, strollers and countless leisure cyclists – ourselves included. Haarlem has a magnificent cathedral, the organ of which is world-famous. The clock towers in Holland, by the way, don't just sound bells. They're fitted with carillons that play tunes every quarter of an hour. Maybe the Dutch are sick of it, but to us strangers it was literally music to our ears. I made recordings of some for posterity.

Courtesy of the Dutch *Vrienden op des Fiets* (VodF) cycling organisation, our first night was spent in a big house on the banks of the Binnem Spaame. VodF has an excellent scheme in which private households rent out rooms to cyclists overnight and provide breakfast the following morning. All of our hosts have themselves taken advantage of the scheme at some point. Every place we stayed in was found via VodF, by the way; a phone call made the previous day was usually all that was needed to secure a night's accommodation for the three of us. My room in Haarlem had fantastic views of the river – hotels and B+B's wouldn't give you this sort of thing for the fixed VodF rate of 20 euros a night! Our landlady used to be an Amsterdam farmer until she was widowed thirty years ago. She sold up – some of her old farmland is now part of Schipol Airport – and with the proceeds bought the house we stayed in.

I remember the evening's chicken dinner more for the trendy restaurant, which could have been in Shoreditch (sorry, Camden – it was adjacent to a canal), because cash payments were not accepted! Breakfast was the same pretty much everywhere we went. It consisted of a boiled egg, fruit

juice, cooked meat, cheeses, breads of various types, plenty of coffee and a choice of jams. Chocolate 'sprinklies' are popular, for some reason (as are fishing programmes on the telly). At Haarlem market, I picked up (for a euro) a 15 year-old 'Straten Nederland Atlas' that proved to be of practical value over the course of the tour – not least because Herman left his maps at home! In Haarlem, we also came across one of the Dutch 'coffee shops' for which Amsterdam (which we didn't visit) is famous. Brian, bless him, thought it was a café – until I pointed out what that smell was...

We continued up the coast to the north-west tip of Holland, with occasional stops for snacks, beer and photos. The beaches are immense and long, and we counted numerous ferris wheels. Brian noted that they seemed to move faster than ones in the UK – as, for that matter, do Dutch mobility scooters! We cycled through a nature reserve that required a ticket (purchased at a local supermarket) to enter. Its tracks twist around a landscape of contrasts, and we shared the path with horses and long-horned cattle that were free to roam wherever they chose. But we had been complacent when it came to how long the journey would take. By the time we got to our destination (Den Helder) it was getting very dark – the swirling beams of its lighthouse acted as a 'target' - and we were getting hungry!

Monday night's stay (another widow) was difficult to find, but a combination of the atlas and a willingness to pester residents helped us get there. As it was too late to seek out a restaurant, the lady who accommodated us kindly provided coffee, bread, jam and cheese to tide over these three hungry cyclists until breakfast. Her house, which was backed by a railway line and had a small airport (shared with the Dutch air force's helicopter squadron) a few hundred yards from her front garden, was some distance from the centre of Den Helder – to which we went the following morning, so we could stock up on provisions.

Our route to the 30km-long Afsluitdijk dike took in some pretty villages and farms, and of course windmills. WWII-era forts and pillboxes were also regular sights. We stopped off at a cafe, where some fantastic soup was



served. That dike was pretty breath-taking as a feat of Dutch engineering, but fairly featureless and boring in journey terms – it's better-suited to fast-moving motor traffic. Imagine a dual-carriageway twenty miles long with a cycle-track alongside and a restaurant in the middle section (we had a picnic there instead). Sometimes, this track rose above a bank and you could see the water on either side of the dike – which, it has to be said, was rather impressive.

Then the direction of travel changed southwards – and we felt the full force of the notorious Dutch wind for the first time! Holland may be flat, but it's very windy. We had been pushed up the coast, and now it was time to pay the price! Our destination was Makkum, on the north-east tip of the IJsselmeer (basically a big lake contained by the Dutch mainland and the Afsluitdijk) where we stayed with a pleasant couple in late middle-age. Makkum reminded me of Maldon in some ways! In the main square we found a quiet and darkly-furnished bar that served cold Heineken (much better than the stuff we get in the UK). We then ate a rather indifferent lasagne in one of the few restaurants to be open on a Tuesday evening. Where is the Dutch cuisine, we wondered? We are wondering still...

*continued next issue*

### **\*) All Good Vrienden!**

The head office for *Vrienden op des Fiets* is at PO Box 1024, 2340 BA Oestgeest, whilst signing up and maintaining your account online seems to be preferred at <https://www.vriendenopdefiets.nl/en>. You can join (become a 'friend') for €10 (£9.50, at the time of writing) via PayPal. This modest amount pays for a year's membership - but you'll only get the full 12 months if you join at the beginning of January! For your money you'll get a pack containing a directory of places to stay, your membership card (you'll often be asked for your 'vriendennummer' when booking accommodation) and an overview map. Allow at least 10 days for your pack to arrive from Holland. There are over 6,000 places to stay in the Netherlands and beyond. 20 euros with one of the 'vrienden' buys you a night's stay, breakfast and - if our experiences are anything to go by - great company. 'Bed-and-breakfasts' cost at least twice this amount, and hotels are even dearer.



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