

SAFFRON WALDEN U3A EASY RIDERS 2016 REPORT

Thursday 14th April 2016 - The Easy Riders' inaugural bike ride got off to an easy start; as the saying goes "start as you mean to go on". We met at the Lord Butler Leisure Centre in sunshine. However, as we riders set off, a few drops of rain fell, but the climb out of Saffron Walden up to Swards End was warming. Having made the ascent, we toured through the countryside along a bridleway and then back onto and along Cole End Lane towards Wimbish. One member of the group picked up a puncture but this was easily and quickly rectified.

Going to a pub was eschewed on this occasion as we decided to have (what turned out to be) a very civilised luncheon at Debden Barns. The five of us sat in the sunshine and enjoyed some delicious food and coffee.

After the leisurely, chatty lunch we made our way down to Debden crossroads and then back up towards Saffron Walden. At Roos Farm, we made a foray along another bridleway which took us to the Thaxted Road which then led (downhill) back to the leisure centre. All in all, a pleasant two and a half hours in the Essex countryside, blessed with warm, sunny weather and good company



Thanks to (l-r, back row) Rod George, Simon Taylor & Simon Teague for getting 'Easy Riders' off the ground!

Thursday 5th May – Tony and Sue White very kindly led this very successful cycle ride in our absence. On a hot sunny day, the group left Newport at the traditional time of 11am and headed towards Arkesden then onto Duddenhoe End, around to Langley Upper Green and Langley Lower Green, then onto The Woodman pub at Nuthampstead in Hertfordshire! The Woodman is quite famous with the added attraction of American air base history (<http://thewoodman-inn.co.uk>). The return journey took the group through Brent Pelham and Clavering. Thanks again to Tony and Sue for standing-in for us.

Thursday 2nd June – We met up at Great Chesterford at the usual time of 11am and took the road through Ickleton, Hinxton, Duxford, Whittlesford and the loop towards Newton. We went back to the 'Tickell Arms' at Whittlesford, which proved perfect for a relaxed, convivial lunch. We returned to our starting point by the same route in the reverse order!

Thursday 7th July – We attempted something quite different; a visit to the newly reopened Henry Moore Foundation. It was a lovely sunny day for our ride around this very picturesque area - we took in Perry Green, Allen's Green and Green Tye; all small villages close to Much Hadham. We stopped for a beer at The Prince of Wales pub, which has its own brewery and we bought tomatoes and cucumbers from the local grower. Conditions were perfect for a picnic lunch amongst the sculptures (see pic below) and for talented artist, Tony White, to undertake some (extraordinarily) quick sketches....



L-R David Powell, Anne Taylor, Rod George, Sue and Tony White (Colin took the photo')



Two examples of Tony's sketches

Thursday 4th August – The meeting point for our ride - along the river Cam - on Thursday 4th August was the car park of 'The Plough', Fen Ditton, www.theploughfenditton.co.uk. We cycled to Chesterton where we crossed the Cam and cycled to Bates Bite Lock where the photograph below was taken. We visited the Milton Country Park and enjoyed the scenic villages of Landbeach and Waterbeach before stopping for a delicious lunch at 'The Crown and Punchbowl', Horningsea, where they offer a two-course lunch for £15! www.cambscuisine.com/the-crown-and-punchbowl We then completed the loop back to Fen Ditton where we parted company after a very satisfactory excursion.



L-R – Tony & Sue White, Linda McNicholas, Rod George, Brian Linford, Colin & Anne Taylor

Thursday 1st September - The September outing of U3A's 'Easy Riders' cycling group was quite exciting – in all sorts of good ways. It incorporated some countryside, some urban areas, riverside and canal side. As ever, the stop for lunch matched up to expectations. It was a lovely sunny day and the track was very dusty in places but very flat which is always a bonus!

We all met at Broxbourne railway station, some of us took our cars and several opted to take the train. We 'bimble' south along the banks of the River Lee (Lea). Took a look at The Lee Valley White Water Centre, and pressed our noses against the windows at the Beam Engine Museum en route then pressed on eventually to Hackney Wick where there's a brewery with pizzeria beside the canal called 'Crate'. We took a walk through the Olympic Village to Stratford where we all caught the train back to Broxbourne.



**Back L-R Anne Taylor, Brian Linford and Tony White.
Front L-R David Powell, Colin Taylor, Linda McNicholas, Paul Vodden and Sue White**

Thursday 6th October - We started out from Widdington at the usual time of 11am, having met at Anne and Colin's house.

In stark contrast to September's outing, this ride took in leafy lanes, attractive tracks and beautiful bridleways. We saw some interesting birds, including a heron, and plenty of rabbits. We rode from Widdington on the Western side of our route and as far as Debden to the North, then to Tilty to the East and down to Broxton in the South. A pub lunch – with the choice of real ales – was enjoyed about 2/3 of the way around at the Prince of Wales at Brick End. The total distance of this ride was about 19 miles.



L-R: Paul, Tony, David, Anne, Colin, Sue, Rod and Simon

Afterwards Colin and Anne laid on afternoon tea for 'Easy Riders' and their partners.....

Thursday 3rd November – Autumn was well and truly with us on 3rd November, so a route which is partly protected from the elements was chosen for this ride. However, we met in brilliant autumnal sunshine at Little Dunmow and soon picked up the Flitch Way eastwards towards Braintree. This trail follows a redundant rail route and is flanked by trees and bushes; another advantage of the ride is that it doesn't have any steep inclines (we are "Easy Riders", after all!). Luncheon was taken at The Booking Hall Café at Rayne, which specialises in homemade cakes and proper tea and coffee. The (doorstep) sandwiches were spectacular and no one left the café hungry! We took a route back to our start by travelling via Felsted and, by popular demand, took a beer stop at the Swan Hotel. There was a distinct chill in the air upon our return to our vehicles – the 12.5 mile ride was just about right!

Thursday 1st December - What ho! – the weather forecasters had, all week, been suggesting a dank, cloudy, overcast day for our outing, however, all through the ride we were bathed in sunshine. Our rendezvous was the nature reserve at Fowlmere which was very peaceful. We travelled through the village and out around the outskirts of Thriplow, where we picked up a track which took us due east to Whittlesford rising up over the M11 and in warmish sunshine all the way. At Whittlesford, we struck northwards for a mile and a half or so, 'til we turned left (westwards) along a broken stone track heading towards Newton and our lunch stop. At the Queen's Head, it was so pleasant in the sunshine that we had our first drink sat in front of the pub. After soup, sandwiches and beer (not necessarily in that order!) we took a fairly direct route back to Fowlmere. Overall, we travelled some 12 miles (although two of our party cycled from home and back, too!). We're looking forward to our January meet when long-johns will probably be the order of the day.

The photograph below shows hardy cyclists (l-r) David, Tony, Brian, Colin, Anne, Sue and Simon



Our numbers are gathering all the time; we now have 12 active 'Easy Riders' listed and we generally have 7 or 8 on the rides; a good number for a relaxed and sociable outing!

Contact colinandannetaylor@live.co.uk to be included in our numbers.