

Hallo everybody

Here we are again with the latest edition of Winged Wheel which I hope you enjoy. What a wet time we have had lately haven't we? As I write this, it is actually sunny and feeling warmer so let's hope it's a sign of things to come and that the floods and puddles start to dry up really soon. I have been editing the on line Winged Wheel Since 2021 and I really enjoy doing it and find it is extremely satisfying to see it all come together. To be honest, I really took it on as another interest during the pandemic. I have been very fortunate in receiving plenty of content from our lovely members and, of course, now that it is on line, no one has to subscribe to it or pay anything to receive it which means that more people are reading it. I have received several favourable comments and the only negative comments have been from people saying they preferred the printed version. In my defence, the decision to discontinue the printed version had been made before I took it on.



Having said all of the above and whilst I am happy to continue as editor for a while, I couldn't do it without Michael's support, encouragement and, above all, patience! I am no computer whiz kid and there have been many times when I have despaired of ever getting it finished!

If you are interested in becoming editor at some time in the not too far distant future, please get in touch. You would be welcome to call in for a cup of tea and I can show you the ropes. The magazine only comes out 4 times a year so it isn't something that needs attention every week.

If you would like to contribute something, please email it to me at editor.ctcsuffolk@gmail.com.

Judy

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President's Ramblings

At last winter is over and we can all look forward to warmer and longer days of cycling. Hopefully the improving weather will mean less ride cancellations on safety grounds. Since I have touched on cycling safety, it seems a good time to draw to your attention two "new guidance documents" that will be added to the web site.

Cycling UK have driven the agenda on cycling safety over the past year or so. This has led to the keeping of lists of leaders (Volunteers) but also to the suggestion that groups should do



“Risk Assessments” for their activities. The new documents, which I recommend you read, take the form of a risk assessment table, and a document listing risks cyclists face.

The table is split into two sections and these cover risks within our control, and those that are beyond our control.

The second document set out factors that are perhaps obvious to experienced riders, but nonetheless needs documenting, to show that the group has devised the risk assessment on a reliable and justifiable basis. These documents will soon be available on the website.

When I sat down to write these documents, I was mindful that there was guidance on the Cycling UK website, but in my view the approach was one of covering every possible activity that any of the types of member groups might embark upon. To illustrate what I mean I give you a “Disabled Cycling Group”. Their risk assessment would include many more and different considerations to those of our group. I believe if we had followed the Cycling UK template, we would have ended up with a cumbersome document with irrelevant content that few would take the trouble to read. I am not without experience in writing “RA’s” as this was part of my duties when working and I do safety officer which include “RA’s” for my Lion’s club.

When it came to the guidance, I was reminded of the old adage that “none of us knows what we don’t know”, and also, we don’t always know what questions need asking. With this in mind, I have tried to list those issues which might not be obvious to novice riders, always assuming that experienced riders who haven’t anticipated dangers have learned from coming a cropper or a near misses or two.

Another saying that springs to mind is “you can take a Horse to water, but you can’t make it drink”, so while the “RA” and guide have been written and will soon be placed on the website, after consideration by your committee, I would encourage you to have a read.

Maurie.

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Acting Secretary’s Notes

Our 2024 AGM will be on 30th April, at 7:30 in the large meeting room at Ipswich Sports Club on Henley Road. ***Once again I am appealing for a volunteer to take over from me as club Secretary.***



Over the last year the work involved has much reduced, due to the following changes :-

- We now have a “Minutes Secretary”, Matt Tong, who has relieved me of the task of minuting Committee meetings (4 a year) and the AGM.
- For our AGM I used to prepare and present a summary of club activities over the last year. Starting with the 2024 AGM I will be dropping that, and replacing it with reports submitted by various members of the Committee.
- My “annual summary” used to be sent to Cycling UK (our parent body) as part of our yearly “returns” to Cycling UK HQ, but now all they ask me is to fill in a short survey – about 10 minutes work.

As a result of these changes, the remaining tasks for the Secretary are as follows :-

1. Arrange 4 meetings of the Committee a year, produce a draft Agenda for each and collect reports from other members of the Committee to add to the final Agenda.
2. Arrange the annual AGM in late April or early May, produce a draft Agenda, notify the members, receive any communications from them raising motions, proposing candidates etc.
3. Complete a short survey for Cycling UK HQ yearly, as mentioned above.
4. Act as the main contact for communications with Cycling UK HQ – this involves a few emails over the year.
5. Act as the initial contact for members or non-members who want information from us, e.g. about our rides, for those who haven't ridden with us before, or more general advice for visitors planning a cycling holiday in Suffolk. As a rough estimate, I reckon I receive about 10 emails of this type in a year.

I realise that there is an initial learning curve for my successor, so as well as getting together for a full handover, I plan to be available to offer support and advice for as long as required.

If you are willing to give it a go, please let me know via the email address below, or else talk it over with me whilst we are out on a ride.

John

Email : suffolkctc@gmail.com

Sunday Rides Ramblings

I am starting this time in the same vein as I did for the last quarter with the predominant feature being rain, rain and more rain with the wettest February on record. Despite the weather, attendances on rides are more or less on a par with last year. Average attendances are slightly up on the first three months of last year although the number of members on rides is slightly down.



The best attended ride was on 3rd March with elevenses at the Nichols' in Hadleigh. Maureen and Ken always look after us well and a visit there is an ideal opportunity for regular, and not so regular, riders to catch up with each other and chat over an (usually) extended and relaxed coffee break. Another well attended ride, in January, was arranged by Paul Fenton to meet with the Colchester CUK Group for elevenses at Capel St Mary. The ride was in memory of Peter Finch, a regular rider with both CTC Suffolk and Colchester CUK Groups, who sadly passed away early last year.

The year for determining the winners of our attendance trophies runs in line with the calendar year. Our most regular rider in 2023 was Judy Scott, amassing the most points to be awarded the overall attendance trophy and also the ladies trophy. These will be presented at the AGM in April. We also have a Junior Attendance Trophy but there was no junior rider in 2023 to take the award.

Now for some boring statistics. Over the calendar year 2023 there was an average of 19 attending for all or part of the ride with a total of 73 members overall putting in an appearance during the year. The corresponding figures for the current year so far are 14 and 48. For a winter quarter these will obviously be lower than an annual average. The figure is split with an average 9 on E Rides and 5 on M Rides.

Spring is gradually creeping up on us now so I am looking forward to dryer and warmer weather to come to make the whole cycling experience more enjoyable.

Michael Scott

Sunday Rides Coordinator

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Treasurer CTC Suffolk

At the 2024 club AGM I will have been CTC Suffolk Treasurer for 7 years. I said at last years meeting that I wished to stand down at the end of the 2023/2024 financial year which end

on the 31st March. I am now asking if anyone is prepared to take over from me.

The job is now, I think, straightforward. It involves all the usual accounting activities, in total about 25 transactions per annum. It includes bill paying, invoices for Winged Wheel adverts and monitoring the bank account and building society savings account. Annually there are the Financial Statements and return to Cycling UK to prepare, including liaison with the Club Auditor.

I think it is important that no role within the club becomes virtually permanent. It discourages new people getting involved, as well as being a burden to the individual carrying out the role.

I would really appreciate someone now taking on this task.

Jon Gorringe

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Maurie, our President, sent in the following useful piece. Ed

CTC Suffolk group - Ride safety guidance.

Although safety guidance is contained in both "Rider" and "Ride leader" guidance, this is in broad terms, and perhaps the actions necessary in certain weather condition are more obvious to some than others.

Firstly, an apology if you already have the awareness or knowledge that this document is setting out.

Secondly for the benefit of group safety, please share your awareness and knowledge with others. None of us knows what we don't know, and blissful ignorance can affect safety.

This document, along with Guidance to "Riders" and "Ride Leader" is to support the groups "Group Ride Safety Risk Assessment" more particularly headings H2.2 and H2.3 Weather conditions and Drivers respectively.

Weather conditions H2.2

Notwithstanding the issue of ride cancellation when weather dictates, conditions can change quickly and unexpectedly. For this reason, it is considered necessary to set some basic rider responses to respective conditions. No one size fits all, so it must be accepted that members will make their own judgements in any given situation.

Ice and Snow

In these conditions riders should increase the gap between themselves and the rider in front. In some situations, riding single file should be the norm as this combined with greater

distance between rider, will reduce the risk of bringing down others should an incident occur. Riders should be cognisant of conditions, and how they can vary with location and why. Riders should be aware of their surroundings, and how topography, buildings and vegetation can influence likely road conditions and act appropriately.

Wind

In these conditions riders should increase the gap between themselves and the rider in front. Again in some situations, riding single file should be the norm as this combined with greater distance between rider, will reduce the risk of multiple collisions should an incident occur. The wind direction and nature will influence any choice regarding single file riding. In gusty side winds single file riding might be more appropriate. In head wind situations those following are shielded so when the leaders are slowed by a gust greater braking space may be needed. Riders need to be aware when changing direction and employ tactics if necessary.

Rain

In these conditions riders should increase the gap between themselves and the rider in front. In some situations, riding single file should be the norm as this combined with greater distance between rider, will reduce the risk of bringing down others should an incident occur. Although rain is not an obvious risk factor, riders should be aware of secondary issues such as increased risk of skidding, the need for greater braking space, potholes hidden by puddles. Visibility may also be an issue for those wearing hooded clothing or clothing that restricts movement. Reduced visibility is also an issue that affect those who wear spectacles.

Drivers H2.3

As a cyclist and a driver, I find it difficult to be impatient with cyclists and other vulnerable road users. Here in lies the key to the bad experiences we all suffer, from time to time. Those who commit these acts have no idea what its like to experience them.

I venture to suggest that drivers are either ignorant, careless, or impatient, perhaps a combination of some or all at any point in time.

These issues are not within our control, but we can influence the outcome with regards to our own safety by exercising considerate behaviour and reporting incidents.

Ignorance, Carelessness, and Impatience

While we can't educate all drivers, we can all do our bit to reduce ignorance carelessness and impatience by facilitating education. The way we can do this is by reporting incidents of bad driving to the Police. Incidents reported are independently evaluated and drivers are prosecuted or given advice, which ultimately leads to driver education. Drivers being

enlightened of the risks they pose to the vulnerable means ultimately better driving and safer roads for all road users particularly the vulnerable.

There are many reasons why a driver might be ignorant, careless, or impatient, none of which are under our control. Cyclists and other road users might also be careless, so it is important that we recognise this and are on our guard against careless action on our part.

While we cyclists can't do much about ignorance or carelessness in advance, our actions can reduce to a minimum driver impatience by following the advice to group riders ie

Being aware of traffic and road conditions.

Splitting into small sub-groups.

Singling out where appropriate.

Pulling in to allow traffic "build ups" to pass.

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Jane Stanley was having a sort out at home and came across these 2 articles which Pete had written in the 1980s which I am sure many of you, particularly those who remember Pete, will enjoy. (Ed)

A First Tuesday Ride

By Pete Stanley

I had cycled for years, but never with a club until I gave in to John Soames nagging at work and I decided to try a Tuesday evening club run. I had got the impression from somewhere that the C.T.C consisted of old timers who lived in the past and looney eccentrics who nobody else would put up with, so it was with some trepidation, that an ex trendy from the swinging sixties, I viewed the array of riders in plusses and Greenspot Nomads. "Oh my God" I thought, "its a good job its dark. If my mates at work saw me with this lot I'd never hear the last of it."



On that Tuesday nights were the likes of Dave Incoll, Mike Hullis, Spencer Booth, Dave Sutton, Phil Treanor, Lee Wardley, Bob Quarton, Richard Pepper, Graham Potter, Derek Amner – names now part of DA folklore, even in my time. We went to Great Wenham by the usual route and I experienced for the first time the art of group riding. Old hands tend to forget how unnerving group riding can be for the beginner. I learnt the meaning of 'oil up', 'easy' and 'on the left'.

The ride was uneventful and we got to the pub where we were joined by Herman Ramsey. The talk at the pub was about the 'dead' Wolsey Road Club ow riders were going to set East Anglia on fire by joining other clubs, for those who thought this was a new phenomena! Conversation was spattered with 'evens', 'float days' 'burn ups' and 'roaring fit'.

After the pub we went round to Spencer's at Capel for coffee and then had an eight up cavalry charge down the A12 (which shows how long ago it was!)

A FIRST SUNDAY CLUB RUN

By Pete Stanley

After my first Tuesday run I decided that there might be something to the C.T.C. The blokes seemed a pleasant, cheerful lot, in spite of going round in plusses and Greenspot Nomads, so I turned up at St. Margaret's Green for my first Sunday run.

Why couldn't they wear jeans, TUF shoes and ex Army anoraks like I did? I couldn't see the need for toe-clips, saddle bags, capes or mud-guards either. If it rained you stayed in bed.

We set off for the hill climb at Nayland, Ken Nichols in the lead. I thought that the pace was a bit slow and found myself wearing out brake blocks at an alarming rate, as I kept catching up with the rider in front. We went by the Hadleigh Road – Washbrook – Higham – Stoke by Nayland route and parked our bikes at the bottom of the hill. There were lots of cyclists about and I went up the hill to watch.

All the way up people stood shouting encouragement as each rider went by. It was impossible not to get caught up in the spirit of the event and a far cry from today's hill climb.

After the event we had lunch at Nayland. (Award yourself two points if you noticed there were no elevenses on this run.) More names, the Nichols, the Tylers, the Amners Wink Gardiner. Outside the pub I looked at the other bikes whilst a puncture was mended. I discovered Dave Incol was no mechanic. For the next 2 hours we rode Essex lane roughstuff and then played football for half an hour before going to tea at Bures.

In the cafe (its now, alas, an antique shop), I first met Colin Kindred, the cycling equivalent of Kilroy (everywhere you go the natives tell you "C.K,was here!"). We feasted on soup, egg, beans and chips and nectoral tea. After tea we rode down the Nayland road where someone had a puncture which was fortunate as by that time I had a red hot bum! Mike Hullis kicked the football into a stream and we all larked about whilst the puncture was repaired.

That night I returned tired but happy to my luxury doss-house in Christchurch St with its Pakistanis to the left, brothel to the right and preying mantis in the flat below. Eventually wiser council prevailed in the Stanley brain and I realised that the pace was right, that you

could ride without catching up with the rider in front, and that a sagging, worn out leather crater was no place to park your bum. I even bought mudguards, toe-clips and a cape, but I've never come to terms with plusses and GREEN SPOT NOMADS.

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Cairngorms tour

By John Thompson

On Wednesday 6th September I was on trains to Aberdeen.

I went via London because East Midlands Rail's cycle carriage policy had got confusing and uncertain. Fortunately, it was only £7.40 more expensive than going via Norwich/Peterborough and there was something to be said for not having so many changes, especially with a bike. It also made it easier putting the bike on board at the starting station and only having to take it off at the destination station.

The one negative was that to get the cheapest fare, I couldn't arrive in Aberdeen until 8.50 pm and then had to find my guest house, the Holburn. It wasn't easy, even with a Google map but with the help of a few locals I got there eventually, with time to go to a nearby pub for a swift couple of pints.

7th September: Aberdeen – Ballater (46.26 miles)

I had quite a hurdle at the start of this ride finding my way out of Aberdeen! Of course, the road I wanted was the one not signposted. It had me retracing up and down the ring road. Not that it didn't have any positives. It included a bridge over the River Dee, which was picturesque despite its location. Eventually I found a pedestrian who directed me to the B9119, which once clear of Aberdeen was a reasonably quiet road. It wasn't long before I stopped to remove my longs. I'm not sure what temperature was reached but it was certainly closer to 30 than 20 centigrade. Yes, in north Scotland! I'm pleased to report it stayed like that for all my riding days, albeit with a short slight blip – read on!

There are three routes from Aberdeen to Ballater following B roads (that is rather than the most direct route, which is straight along the A93). The one I chose was to turn off the B9119 onto the B9125 (both roads follow the River Dee and over river bridges offering idyllic settings) through Schoolhill, to then turn onto a short lanes stretch through Hirn to Banchory, which included seeing the picturesque Bridge of Feugh waterfall. I chose that route because I thought Banchory would be an attractive market town. I proved myself correct! I made use of a café for a bacon bap and mug of tea. From Banchory, it was a short retrace past the waterfall, involving a shortish but steep hill, along the B974 to Strachan, then the B976 through to Ballater. It runs very much parallel to the A93. The scenery was wooded in parts and in others had a rustic rural feel with a lot of farm buildings and sheep,

cattle, and horses grazing in fields, with the backdrop of hills in the distance.



I arrived at the Alexandra Hotel around 3.50 pm. It's one of those smallish but nice hotels that is also popular as a local pub. The manager happily put my bike in the store room. After a few minutes relaxing in my room, making use of the teasmid, I bought a pint of real ale and packet of ready salted and sat at a table on the lawn and unwound, savouring the lovely warmth and sunshine. It hadn't been a big day distance wise and I hadn't yet reached the most testing hills but there had been a lot of up and down over those of the shortish (not all so short!) but steep type so I was glad to relax.

Ballater is another attractive market town so before dinner I had a stroll around and took photos

8th September: Ballater – Blair Atholl (67.34 miles) The Alexandra Hotel's full Scottish breakfast was hearty!

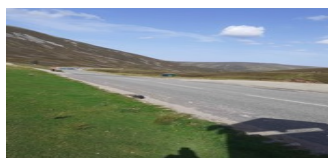
It was just as well because I had a challenging ride ahead of me. It started gently enough, continuing along the lovely wooded B976 to Crainie. A driver coming in the opposite directions stopped to advise me the road was blocked a bit further along. Considering the distance I had to do it concerned me, especially when another cyclist, stopped by the roadside, had abandoned his plans. I continued in the hope it was possible to get through on a bike. A bit further along, a police officer at a t-junction clarified the situation. It would just be a temporary closure when the royal car/s came along en-route to Balmoral. I think the officer was standing at the junction of the road to the estate. As I came over the river bridge into Crainie, people were lined alongside the road but I didn't get any claps or cheers! Just to say, I won't keep repeating that the villages are picturesque because just about all of them were throughout the tour, so you can take it as a given.

From Crainie, it was onto the A93 but I was surprised how relatively quiet it was, especially as it's the route to the tourist spot of Braemar. Perhaps it being September helped. If so, I gamble a guess it's quiet outside the main holiday months. It leads me to say that despite being a main road the scenery is spectacular so if I'm correct it's worth doing outside the main holiday months. However, it was also where the 'real' hills started, especially climbing to Braemar. That said, the toughest was still to come so read on. The A93 bypasses Braemar

so I came off it temporarily to see the village and use the facilities. It's a typical tourist place but it is nice. I made use of the Co-op for an early sandwich lunch.

Leaving Braemar, it was immediately up a climb. When I stopped at the top to take photos, I had a shock. I realised my frame-fitting Zefal pump wasn't there! After initially frapping about what I would do if I punctured I remembered I had seen an outdoor shop in Braemar that did mountain bike hire. I descended back to Braemar praying I wouldn't have to re-climb all for nothing. The only type of pump they had was one of those mini ones. Popular as they seem to be, I'm not keen on them, although I gather I might have to get used to them, now the Zefal frame-fitting pumps are being discontinued. For now, however, a beggar couldn't be a chooser.

The re-climb was followed by a nice long descent. The A93 was now even quieter, which was still surprising, especially considering the next place it goes to, which is the climb of the Cairnwell. An average gradient of 2.5% might sound like chicken feed but it's 14.4 km (exactly 9 miles) and rises from 363 metres (nearly 1191 feet) to 682 metres (nearly 2241 feet). The reward is what greets you at the top. It's the perfect example of why I say riding in parts of Scotland is the closest we have to riding in the mountainous parts of Europe. The nature of the scenery combined with it being a skiing centre with ski hire, cable cars and a café/bar/restaurant, it was very much like being at the top of a climb in France/Spain/Italy, Switzerland/Austria. That feeling was helped by the number of cyclists using the café. One of them was resting his head on a table. I joked, "I can't think why you need to do that." He replied with words to the effect he was knackered. No, I'm not refraining from including expletives. I didn't hear any but to confirm he did say it jovially.



I used the cafe to replenish and lingered a while, sitting and chatting with said cyclist and his fellow rider.

The café isn't quite at the top so I had a 'splash' more climbing, which was followed with a very welcome long descent. Shortly after the descent, I left the A93 to follow the B950 to junction with the A924, just south of Kirkmichael, where deciding I was hungry and thirsty again, I made use of the village store. I put it that way because it might have had more to do with the fact I wanted an excuse for another short rest. Whatever, replenished and a little rested, thanks to a village seat, I continued along the A924 (not uncomfortably busy) to Pitlochry, which provided memories of my 'end to end.' From Pitlochry, the slight hill out to the roundabout for the B8079 isn't anything really but after what I had done it felt hard. I

followed the said road for the final 7½ miles to Blair Atholl. The road runs very close to and parallel to the A9 so it seems likely it's the old road.

Now for something funny! I was booked into the Atholl Arms, which I had interpreted as being a pub. After riding some way through the village and not seeing a pub of that name, I got concerned. Then after coming round a slight bend, suddenly there was the car park for the Atholl Arms HOTEL. It couldn't have been more different to what I had assumed! It was one of those grandiose Downton Abbey type buildings.

Well, considering that, it's rates were very reasonable and what a charming place it is. The receptionist was welcoming and helpful. As I was cycling she asked if I wanted a room with a bath as well as a shower (I was happy with just a shower) and told me where I could store my bike without prompting from me.

After such a tough day's riding I crashed out on my bed for a while before showering and wandering down to dinner. Yes, the food and beer was good.

Finally, The Cairnwell was, of course the climb I was hinting at when I said the toughest climb was still to come. However, even that wasn't the toughest of the tour – read on!

9th September: Blair Atholl – Kinloch Rannoch (18.38 miles)

After the ride the day before I won't pretend I was sorry this day's ride was very short. It was nice to think I could easily reach the destination by lunchtime and just relax and get my legs back. It was also nice to think the next two days rides would also be short.

On my 'end to end' I rode on the A9 so I almost certainly by-passed Blair Atholl. Nevertheless, being so close to it still brought back happy memories. Also, the Atholl Arms hotel is next door to Blair Atholl station, which I passed through on the Inverness – Glasgow stretch of my train journey home. Before starting my ride, therefore, the rail geek couldn't resist visiting the station and taking photos.

Added to that, for the first 5½ miles of my ride, the B8079 runs alongside the rail line.

Although the ride was short, it still had some testing hills of the short (ish) steep type. Ironically, the first one was off-route. Before coming away, I enquired via the Scottish Borders Randonneurs' Facebook page about the location of Sustrans Route 7, which enables avoiding the A9. I was advised it starts in Calvine. Once in Calvine, which is only a small village, having come off the B8079 into lanes, I set about finding the precise location to save time on my ride in three days time, which would be long and challenging. To find it, meant going very slightly off-route but, of course, it involved a steep hill! It was made even more ironic because if I had just turned left, instead of going straight on, to stay on my actual route, I would have had a descent. I admit I felt lethargic about the hill but climb it I did and I found the start of Route 7 easily enough.

I then retraced, descending the hill to turn right onto my actual route for more descending.

This ride was predominantly along quiet, picturesque wooded lanes. In the village of Trinafour, I paused by a t-junction. There was a lane to the right, which I figured could lead to Route 7, thus saving a few miles on Tuesday. However, there wasn't a cycle route sign indicating it took you to it. As, I had plenty of time today, I could ride the lane to find out. However, the very steep hill away from the junction was off-putting as I had psyched myself out of doing any more climbing than necessary on this day. I kept trying to tell myself not to be a wimp but the wimp still won, partly because I persuaded myself I could clarify by phoning Sustrans Scotland on Monday morning – more on that to come

I arrived in Kinloch Rannoch between midday and 12.30 and chatted with three other cyclists who gave me a good report on the village (Riverbank) café. After taking some photos I went to the café for a light bite lunch. As my hotel was just a 'splash' further along, I lingered for a while over a second pot of tea, savouring being under no pressure and the thought of a lazy afternoon and another two days basically the same.

I arrived at the Loch Rannoch hotel around 2.00 pm. The receptionist advised my room wasn't ready so I sat outside with my paperback until she came and told me it was. While I was sitting the weather started deteriorating. It clouded over, the wind got up considerably and there were spits of rain. It seemed to confirm I had been right not to get over-optimistic about such lovely weather continuing for a whole week in Scotland – read on!

The Loch Rannoch hotel is four star and part of an estate. The facilities are very good but although it's in a popular tourist spot and has a spa I wouldn't call it touristy. Well, perhaps it is with a difference because it's geared up for outdoor active tourists. It offers bike hire, watersports (canoe hire), a gym and facilities for squash, table tennis etc. It's in a lovely setting, opposite the loch and I had an idyllic view from my room. Oh yes, the food is good!

10th September: Loch Rannoch/Rannoch Moor circuit (33.76 miles)

This was the day for achieving my main objective of the trip – to see Rannoch Moor.

It was still overcast and the wind was still blowing and I'm not sure now if I felt a few spits of rain. However the sun was trying to break through. The outward part of the circuit was westerly into the wind. However, the B846 following the north shore of Loch Rannoch, through the villages/ hamlets of Aulich and Bridge of Ericht and the village of Killichonan, is very wooded so well sheltered. Once past the junction, with the road that follows the south shore of the Loch, you're then on the moor which is very open, so the wind was noticeable again, especially on the hills (again of the short(ish) steep variety. I suppose the best description of it's beauty is "wild." The road ends at Rannoch station, which nicely has a café. On the way I had been passed by a cycling couple and I saw them in there. After just a short

ride and a full Scottish breakfast, a mug of tea and slice of carrot cake sufficed. Like Blair Atholl, Rannoch station provided nice memories, in this instance of my east – west ride (Lowestoft Ness Point, the most easterly point in the UK to Ardnamurchan Point, the most westerly point on the UK mainland). On the section of my train journey home between Fort William and Glasgow, the train called there.

Retracing along the B846 through the moor, I was initially savouring the tailwind but then it suddenly drastically dropped. The good news, however, was that the sky was clearing, the sun was through and it was getting very warm again. By the time I got back to the junction of the road following the south shore of the loch, still having my longs and long-sleeve top on, I felt too warm. This ride was predominantly along quiet, picturesque wooded lanes. In the village of Trinafour, I paused by a t-junction. There was a lane to the right, which I figured could lead to Route 7, thus saving a few miles on Tuesday. However, there wasn't a cycle route sign indicating it took you to it. As, I had plenty of time today, I could ride the lane to find out. However, the very steep hill away from the junction was off-putting as I had psyched myself out of doing any more climbing than necessary on this day. I kept trying to tell myself not to be a wimp but the wimp still won, partly because I persuaded myself I could clarify by phoning Sustrans Scotland on Monday morning – more on that to come

I arrived in Kinloch Rannoch between midday and 12.30 and chatted with three other cyclists who gave me a good report on the village (Riverbank) café. After taking some photos I went to the café for a light bite lunch. As my hotel was just a 'splash' further along, I lingered for a while over a second pot of tea, savouring being under no pressure and the thought of a lazy afternoon and another two days basically the same.

I arrived at the Loch Rannoch hotel around 2.00 pm. The receptionist advised my room wasn't ready so I sat outside with my paperback until she came and told me it was. While I was sitting the weather started deteriorating. It clouded over, the wind got up considerably and there were spits of rain. It seemed to confirm I had been right not to get over-optimistic about such lovely weather continuing for a whole week in Scotland – read on!

The Loch Rannoch hotel is four star and part of an estate. The facilities are very good but although it's in a popular tourist spot and has a spa I wouldn't call it touristy. Well, perhaps it is with a difference because it's geared up for outdoor active tourists. It offers bike hire, watersports (canoe hire), a gym and facilities for squash, table tennis etc. It's in a lovely setting, opposite the loch and I had an idyllic view from my room. Oh yes, the food is good!

10th September: Loch Rannoch/Rannoch Moor circuit (33.76 miles)

This was the day for achieving my main objective of the trip – to see Rannoch Moor.

It was still overcast and the wind was still blowing and I'm not sure now if I felt a few spits of rain. However the sun was trying to break through. The outward part of the circuit was

westerly into the wind. However, the B846 following the north shore of Loch Rannoch, through the villages/ hamlets of Aulich and Bridge of Ericht and the village of Killichonan, is very wooded so well sheltered. Once past the junction, with the road that follows the south shore of the Loch, you're then on the moor which is very open, so the wind was noticeable again, especially on the hills (again of the short(ish) steep variety. I suppose the best description of it's beauty is "wild." The road ends at Rannoch station, which nicely has a café. On the way I had been passed by a cycling couple and I saw them in there. After just a short ride and a full Scottish breakfast, a mug of tea and slice of carrot cake sufficed. Like Blair Atholl, Rannoch station provided nice memories, in this instance of my east – west ride (Lowestoft Ness Point, the most easterly point in the UK to Ardnamurchan Point, the most westerly point on the UK mainland). On the section of my train journey home between Fort William and Glasgow, the train called there.

Retracing along the B846 through the moor, I was initially savouring the tailwind but then it suddenly drastically dropped. The good news, however, was that the sky was clearing, the sun was through and it was getting very warm again. By the time I got back to the junction of the road following the south shore of the loch, still having my longs and long-sleeve top on, I felt too warm. I turned onto the south shore road to immediately stop on the bridge in the hamlet of Bridge of Gaur (so-named because the River Gaur flows under the bridge) to dis-robe.

The lane following the south shore is a bit hillier than the B847 but for the most part it's not wooded so the views of the loch are better. It is, however, very picturesquely wooded for the final approx 2 miles into Kinloch Rannoch, passing through an area called the Clan trail.



11th September: Loch Tummel and back (20.37 miles)

Before starting this morning's ride it was time to phone Sustrans Scotland to see if they could advise me about that possible connecting lane to Route 7. It couldn't have been a bigger failure! The young lady I spoke to explained she wasn't from Scotland and had no personal knowledge of the route but undertook to refer my query to the ranger who had prime responsibility for it and he would respond in about 3 months. In view of the nature of tomorrow's ride and the time factor, I concluded it wasn't worth the risk so resolved that I would retrace to Calvine.

Onto this days ride and I had pondered a lot. I could have had a significantly longer ride by following the south shore of Loch Tummel to Pitlochry and return along the north shore. However, I'd already been to Pitlochry and knew returning would involve a stretch of busy main road. Well, that's the excuse I used on myself to stay in the take it easy mode!

It was actually rather cold when I set off, but the sun was out in splendour and there wasn't a cloud in the sky. It was like one of those high pressure winter days but, fortunately, without a frost. However, it was also the type of early morning weather that suggests it will get warm later. Initially, however, I wasn't being my usual over-cautious self in keeping longs and long-sleeve top on.

I rode east along the B8019 through Tummel Bridge, continuing along it following the north shore of the loch to a point just east of the village of Tressal, where I became satisfied with what I had done. This stretch of the B8019 is also picturesquely wooded but it does restrict the views of the loch but, yes, it's a nice ride. When I reached the point where I decided to stop, I sat on a tree stump to have a nibble from the pannier and took some photos. It had also now got warm so I removed longs and long-sleeve top. I then retraced through Tummel Bridge. In view of what I explained about Bridge of Gaur, I'm sure you can work out why Tummel Bridge is so-named. If you are struggling, it's because the River Tummel runs under the village bridge

I arrived back in Kinloch Rannoch around 12.30 pm. I was disappointed to discover the Riverbank café is closed on Mondays. It meant having a light bite at the hotel, which turned out to be a rather large light bite and, okay I own up, a couple of pints.

I spent the rest of the afternoon in relaxed mode with my paperback.

12th September: Kinloch Rannoch – Grantown-on-Spey (76.12 miles)

The rest was now over and today would be testing. The warm weather was also continuing its return – not that I minded that!

Initially, as I've indicated, I retraced to Calvine. As I passed the t-junction in Trinafour, I thought, *"I bet I'm going to see the other end of you soon."*

Sustrans Route 7 runs from Sunderland to Inverness. Today I was using it as far as Kingussie. To just south of Dalwhinnie, it's predominantly an off-road path but with short bursts on what are now no-through roads. Guess what! Yes, one of those roads was the lane from Trinafour! At my time of riding it, there were one or two rough patches, ironically on the road stretches, but it's predominantly well surfaced. Even I would be reluctant to ride on the A9 now but even ignoring that, just being away from the noise of heavy traffic is, in my view, worthwhile if a cycle path is well maintained and reasonably direct. In this case, it also offers splendid views that you wouldn't be able to enjoy on the A9. For the most part, this

stretch runs right alongside the A9 on the right and the Glasgow – Inverness rail line on the left, albeit more distant. Thus it provided memories of my ‘end-end’ in two ways.

At the start of the path from Calvine, there is a sign advising it rises to 1515 feet (462 metres). That is the top of the Drumochter Pass, which makes another point in the route’s favour. It provides the opportunity to do a climb that would otherwise not be available to many because of not wanting to ride on the A9. At the least, it provides an aeons pleasanter way of doing it. I have points of disagreement with Sustrans but I give them full marks for this one. I should also mention I passed a lot of rangers attending to the path.



From the top of the Pass, the path naturally descends for a while to finish and take you on-road just before a roundabout just south of Dalwhinnie. It then forks left onto the old A9 to pass through Dalwhinnie from where there is a short stretch along the A889 to turn right along a very nice lane to the village of Etteridge. Although no longer right alongside the A9, again the road is very much parallel to it. It’s a lovely wooded lane with nice hill views and it would have been a shame to have missed it. After Etteridge, I’m not sure whether or not I was on the old A9 but I think it was at this point that I was riding right alongside the A9 on my right and the rail line on my left, thus yet more memories of my ‘end to end,’ added to by passing through Dalwhinnie and Newtonmore, to where I was now heading. In Newtonmore, I made use of a store and a public seat for yet another sandwiches and sausage roll lunch. I then followed the old A9 for the 3 miles to Kingussie, a place of particular memories of my ‘end to end.’ It was one of my overnight stays using the youth hostel. It was during the cup final and in the pub in the evening a local gave me a wry smile and said, “I suppose you want England to win.” He seemed surprised when I said I wasn’t bothered. The hostel closed in 1995 (just 4 years after my ride) and is reportedly now an upmarket restaurant and guest house so is perhaps still a good place to stay.

Back to this day’s ride, in Kingussie I turned right onto the B970, which I followed through Boat Of Garten to Grantown on Spey. This road runs very much parallel to the main road route consisting of the A9 and A95. I think I can confidently say the B970 is considerably quieter (although still busy after Boat of Garten) and offers better scenery. However, I can also probably reasonably confidently say it’s also hillier! This was certainly a testing final

stage, albeit yet again a lovely wooded route, interspersed with nice hill views. I passed a number of other cyclists, mostly going in the opposite direction.

I enjoyed the challenge of that final stage but felt relief to finally be descending to the A95 just south-east of Grantown-on-Spey for the final mile into town but there was a sting in the tail. With just around ½-mile to go there is a slight rise. It's the sort that if you were fresh you would hardly notice it but after what I had done it was another matter!

Grantown-on-Spey is a small town with the main street on the A95. Sadly, it didn't do much for me. At the time of my visit it at least had what seemed a decent bike shop, Basecamp Bikes, albeit seemingly predominantly mountain bikes orientated. It also had a café attached to it (I didn't use it) and did bike hire, including e-bikes. Note I used the past tense because also sadly it's now indicated online as permanently closed.

More positively, my hotel, the Bhen Mhor was good. It was another cheap and cheerful simple type of place, also popular with the locals for food and serving as a pub. Food is served in the bar and it's hardly surprising it's popular with locals. The considerable menu is impressive and the food is plentiful. As usual, I've forgotten what I had but I remember thinking I was well stoked up for the next day's ride, which was just as well – read on!

13th September: Grantown-on-Spey – Aberdeen (73.92miles)

Whether this ride could be called saving the best to last perhaps depends on how one looks at it. Scenery wise it's debatable because I had great scenery every day. However, if one regards the toughest ride of a tour to be the best, it certainly was and it was almost from the off.

Initially I retraced out of town along the A95 for a little over the first mile to then turn right onto the A939 and that's when it all started! Put simply, the A939 through Tomintoul is continuously up and down. While they are all long drags some of them are also quite steep and I don't hide that I succumbed to walking one of them. However, the scenery is spectacular

Eventually, or perhaps more accurately after what seemed a lifetime, I reached the junction with the A944, which runs all the way to Aberdeen, although it oddly stops for a few miles where it's the A97 to then turn right where the A944 restarts. It was so soothing to have a few miles of downhill and although a main road it was surprisingly quiet. As Aberdeen is at sea level I wondered if I just might get a predominantly downhill ride for the rest of the way – read on!

I think it was the village of Bellabeg where I stopped at the store and used a seat for my usual type of lunch.

Now, it might have been predominantly downhill all the way if I had stayed on the A97 and A944. However, from the village of Glenkindle, on the A97 stretch, there is a more direct lanes route. It avoids continuing north on the A97 to rejoin the A944, taking you to it considerably closer to Aberdeen. I expect you've guessed what's coming! Yes, there is a lot of climbing so it almost certainly took longer. Seriously however, I didn't regret it because the rolling hills scenery along them was nice. They took me through the villages of Milltown of Towie, Sinnahard, Ellphillock, Ley, Muir of Fowlie, Little Lynhurk and Kirton, shortly after which I re-joined the A944. This part of it was busy.

When I reached Westhill, which could be termed 'greater Aberdeen' my legs were pretty tired. I pondered whether to stop at the Tesco Express, with just 5 miles to go. I resolved I was touring so did.

Those final 5 miles could have been along a busy dual carriageway but there is a signed cycle route. Once properly in Aberdeen, with the help of one pedestrian, I found the Holborn guest house reasonably easily. On the way, I passed a pub that I assessed to be in doable walking distance and seemed the best option for food. I arrived at the guest house a bit after 7.00 pm. By the time I was in my room, in view of the time, I resolved to shower in the morning to give getting to the pub for food (yes, it was food that concerned me, not beer!) priority.

Now the start of an irony. It was while walking to the pub that the weather completely turned. It got considerably cooler and the wind got up quite strong. I forget the name of the pub but although there was no indication it was a Wetherspoon, with the price of the beer, i.e. cheap, and the nature of the menu it was very like one. Gammon steak and a sundae for dessert went down well. The pub was a nice one to spend the last night of a successful tour. For my walk back to the guest house, it was raining slightly.

14th September: Train journey home

The irony continued this morning. It was raining for my 2.2 miles ride to Aberdeen station. So the only occasion I got a little wet was for the short ride to the station on the day of returning home. Also, the wind was still strong so for a little way it provided the toughest headwind of the tour – through the Aberdeen streets! In other words, apart from one slight temporary blip the weather had been superb for the whole trip until it turned for the worse the night before returning home when the riding in a real sense was all over. Knowing my usual luck with weather, I would usually expect it to be completely the other way round.

On the trains home I reflected and felt satisfaction for two reasons. Firstly, another box ticked and I am now very close to achieving my objective of having seen all the best parts of Scotland – just Orkney and Shetland to do. Secondly, I rode two consecutive days of over 70 miles over very tough terrain, carrying two fully loaded panniers and a comprehensive

toolkit, and even the shorter rides involved a lot climbing. If I can still do that at age 70 I feel very happy about myself!

It seems, as is more usual the bad weather was confined to north Scotland because I was over-warm on my 2.78 miles ride between Kings Cross and Liverpool Street.

Adendum: I replaced my Zefal pump at Mick Madgett's shortly after return. Mick's assistant, Shaun advised me to make the most of it because Zefal has stopped their production. He agreed with me it's a shame because they are such good pumps.

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Suffolk Churches by Cycle: Edwardstone

There is an awful lot to see when you manage to locate this church. St. Mary the Virgin is to the west of the village and is not visible from the road.

Look for the sign to "The Church", directing you through an ornate brick archway (with gatehouse), along a sweeping avenue of trees. The church is in a lovely location, overlooking the river Box valley.

The What3words location is: [snuggled.headsets.steep](#) (rather appropriate I feel).

This is an ancient Saxon site and is listed in the Little Domesday book. The current flint church being built from the thirteenth century onwards.



Medieval wool wealth created a grand church and through a charitable trust a quality Victorian restoration took place, retaining many historical features.

The church guidebook is 68 pages long so this is only a taster.

Ancient floor brasses can be found near the organ of the Brand family of Edwardstone Hall with one showing six sons and another, six daughters.

In the seventeenth century a wealthy London merchant, John Morden married Susanna Brand. Ultimately a charitable college, Morden College was founded at Blackheath, London.

Over the years the trustees have generously contributed towards various church projects which has ensured the church remains in remarkably good condition.

Of particular note is Dame Susan's Charity and there is a portrait of her on the south wall.

There is an attractive Jacobean font cover and a highly carved pulpit.

Numerous decorative candelabra light the church interior.

The roof dates back to the fourteenth century.

Parts of the decorative red and white "Father Smith" organ date back to 1670 and has been rebuilt and enhanced relatively recently.

Behind the altar on the wall is an ornamental screen (the Reredos), described as "the crowning glory of the Victorian restoration". It is in three panels of deeply carved wood with gilt and colour added.



The oldest bell dates back to 1640 and was made by Miles Graye bell foundry of Colchester.

In 1986 the bells were restored with a new tenor (the largest bell) made by Taylors of Loughborough and inscribed "The Morden College Bell" ie funded by the Trust.

A modern addition near the altar is a Bishop's Chair in light oak.



In the churchyard is a Commonwealth War Grave and also a 1985 memorial to Commander Gerard Holdsworth who ran the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Italy ie he was a secret service agent in the Second World War.

This church is well worth seeking out at any time of the year. Snowdrops in winter, a scenic spot for a picnic in summer and there is always the option of popping down to the White Horse Inn (and brewery) in the village.

Derek Worrall

Heart of Suffolk Route and Suffolk Coastal Route

Being a long-standing Volunteer Ranger for Sustrans, I was interested to read John Thompson's article about his Birthday Ride. John asks the question who was responsible for the signing of the 'Suffolk Coastal Route' and the 'Heart of Suffolk Route'.

The Suffolk Coastal Route and National Cycle Route 1 (which are the same route through the Suffolk Coastal Area) were signed by David Kemp, when he was one of the Cycling Officers for Suffolk County Council. The use of green signs was chosen following much opposition from senior councillors to standard blue signs. The point was made that green signs are less obtrusive in a rural area and I agree.

The Heart of Suffolk route was signed by Anthony Wright, who was another cycling officer at Suffolk County Council. Brown signs were chosen for the route as it was intended as a 'tourist route'. Sadly, as no money is set aside for maintenance of signs and surfaces on cycle routes, the Heart of Suffolk route has fallen into to a state of disrepair.

Where volunteers are active, the National Cycle Route through Suffolk is monitored for missing signs, overgrown vegetation, potholes, etc., Another problem is Cycling Officers were axed from Suffolk County Council, which means no dedicated person looks after cyclists' anymore. Also, as cycle route direction signs are not considered important by SCC, it is very difficult to have missing signs replaced. Sustrans Rangers have adhesive signs that can be used as a temporary measure; however, vandals delight in removing them.

Stephen
Read



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