

A recent day out took in the 'East Coast Challenge' charity circuit of five East Anglian towns whose names start with S: Stalham, Swaffham, Sheringham, Southwold and Stowmarket. This is a good day out, with spin-offs as the organisers direct rider's entry fees to Hope House (Ipswich) and Riders for Health, so as well as a great excuse to get out on the bike, it does some real good in the community: for details visit www.eastcoastchallenge.co.uk or call in to Davey Bros Motorcycles in Ipswich. Note it is not a race, and that you should provide proof of visiting each at least three of the key towns, taking a minimum of seven hours from start to finish.

Three of us met up at Stowmarket in October, and took the A1120 for Yoxford, peeling off at Peasenhall for Halesworth via Walpole and Heveningham. A great area this: quiet roads in lovely countryside with unfamiliar bends that are ideal for practicing lines for good views, whilst keeping out of the way of oncoming traffic, and hazard such as side-turnings.

We crossed over the A12 north of Blythburgh, and past Reydon to *Southwold* where walkers were enjoying the crisp air, and a few brave souls were taking a dip by the pier. A quick stretch of the legs and a couple of photographs later we headed off again, this time on the B1127 to Wrentham, and on to Beccles; then the B1062 for Bungay for a loo stop and a stroll to take a picture at the castle.

Next we moved North towards Norwich on the well-signed and enjoyably curvy B1332, waving politely to members of the Vincent club and a few riders of modern machinery as they came the other way.

Using a short stretch of the A47 Southern Bypass to stay clear of 'the city' we veered west on the B1108; this is another varied ribbon of tarmac...especially interesting near Watton (home of Norfolk Triumph –well worth a visit) where we encountered a

kamikaze Kawasaki rider who was using all, yes all the road on twisty-blind bits, and scaring Sunday motorists sh***ess.

Next we took the equally fun B1077, arriving in *Swaffham* at 12:45. Parked the bikes in glorious sunshine and piled into the Legends café on the marketplace. It was very pleasant sitting outside in the sun; sandwiches arrived quickly, and I needed lots to drink to avoid heatstroke.

Leaving the warmth of mid-Norfolk, we headed for Fakenham up the A1065 –an enjoyable fast road; then the A148; and B1156 to Blakeney, and the area of coast near Cley rich in ‘twitchers’. Apparently many migrate from miles around to this area, hoping to see the lesser-sunburnt tourist as they relax and feed along the sandy sea-fringe.

As you might expect when that area is heavy with tourists this stretch was very busy and really slow going. On this winding road we had rubber-necking traffic, gaggles of bicycles, and lurking lines of sand and gravel to cope with, and we had no time to check out the very pretty sea views. Almost an hour and a half after Swaffham, we crept into *Sheringham*, where ice cream-licking families were enjoying the peak of a perfect autumn Sunday afternoon.

A pay-and display car park hard by the shops (get your nets here) provided another proof of place and time and a chance to pick up another welcome drink. As we were approaching 150 miles run, we pulled over to refuel a few miles after Sheringham. Next we used a short stretch of the A140 from Cromer to Norwich - not the most interesting road, especially when many Sunday-trippers are pootling back to the city – until near Aylsham we turned off on to the much more attractive A149, winding along the valley of the River Bure via North Walsham and on to the Broads.

Over then to Smallburgh, and then *Stalham* where we stopped for more ‘we were here’ photos. Then on the A1151 linking to Wroxham, where the last tourists were still shopping to stock up

their cabin-cruisers as the afternoon sun drooped ever heavier and flights of ducks headed for home.

Taking the Sprowston road into Norwich, we slipped through the city centre at tea-time with no hold-ups, and south again on the A140 until immediately outside the city and crossing the River Yare, we turned westwards through Keswick onto the delightful B1113. On that weekend a diversion around road works in the Bracon Ash/Wreningham area sent us back to the comparatively dull A140 for another 15 miles.

Farther down the A140, after Scole we dived off onto the fast-flowing A143 towards Bury St Edmunds, and enjoyed some bends, making good progress towards Rickingham. The temperature was now zooming downwards again, and we pulled into a lay-by near Wortham to reinstall warm layers -for me it was the trusty heated waistcoat: Ahh, that's better!

The sun was almost fully set as we passed through Rickingham, and switched onto the twisty B1113, a sprint to close our loop back at *Stowmarket*. Snapping a last picture to show the time in Tesco car park we counted up 237 miles of fun riding, some of which had been entirely new to us. Although the shortest possible routes are said to be around 205 miles, we had deliberately chosen twisty and enjoyable roads, and this selfless act of charity gained me a Standard Award mug, which I use daily with pride.

Now we're plotting to do it again.