

The Benefice 'Triathlon' – The Norfolk Churches Trust Bike Ride 12 September

Inspired by a couple he was leading through marriage preparation, one of which is a (proper) triathlete, our Rector came up with the dubious brainwave of adding some running and swimming to the sedentary cycling more usually associated with the Norfolk Churches Trust Bike Ride. Not content to put himself through this alone, he convinced to join him: his wife, a couple of churchwardens (Thomas Courtauld, Matlaske and Harry Steel, Baconsthorpe), the startled soon-to-be-married couple (Joe Tomkins and Tessa Furnivall) and two other gamely chaps (Alex Baily from Gresham and Thomas Abbott from Saxthorpe)

We met at 8.30 am at All Saints Beeston Regis, where bikes were left and the 'triathletes' were driven to St Peter's Sheringham, where we registered our visit (the sole visitor ahead of us were Emma, Claire, Lucy and Sarah Cletheroe, from Edgefield at the start of their mammoth 100 church day..) and then set off on a gentle jog (the Rector's cartilage prevented us running from the Benefice, despite our enthusiasm for doing so...) to Sheringham East Beach where we stripped off into our speedos and ran Chariots of Fire style into the surf. Queen of Logistics Delphine Steel and an equally long suffering wife (Laura Baily) of another 'competitor' provided essential beach assistance in collecting our strewn trainers and t shirts.



'Athletes' and Support Staff at All Saints Beeston Regis

The sea could politely be described as bracing, but the Lord had given us calm conditions – a light breeze, in coming tide and current taking us towards Beeston Regis (rather than Belgium). Breast stroke was certainly the most popular method, with bursts of crawl from some. It took us half an hour or so to swim the kilometre to the steps up the cliffs at Beeston Regis, where we emerged from the sea, with the bearded and fully thatched Rector resembling a biblical figure (or possibly Neptune). We were all pretty cold and glad of the towels provided by the Logistical Goddesses on the beach. We had some surprised looks from the residents of the mobile home park as we emerged

up the steps and made our way to Beeston Regis Church car park and our bikes. Our changeover from swimming to cycling was far from Olympian, but much more comfortable: hot, sweet tea, chocolate brownie and a good deal of faffing around before we signed in at All Saints Church and pedalled away.



Baywatch - Emerging from the sea at Beeston Regis

Readers will be glad to know that no one in the party was squeezed into any unseemly lycra, as we set off on a fairly motley selection of bikes, up the long, coastal hill towards the A148 where we crossed, a little out of breath, and followed a confident vicar along a footpath which wasn't entirely suitable for road bikes, eventually reaching All Saints Gresham without a puncture. From here we took a more conventional route to St Mary's Bessingham, with its distinct round Saxon tower, before taking a cross country route (much of which required walking...) to St Peter's North Barningham, where we found Maurice de Bunsen on his knees, not praying, but in fact cleaning. After discussing the pigment make up in the colouring on the pink walls, we set off for Baconsthorpe, past Kevin's pig sign and found Tessa McCosh mid flow with an interested party at the Heydon memorial. Fortified by plums and other miscellaneous home produce, we remounted and made off for St Mary's Barningham Winter, entering the park at the Cromer Lodge, where we enjoyed the tranquillity of this peaceful spot, and admired the Seamans' calves. Last stop was Benefice HQ, St Peter's Matlaske, where we were shown the Rector's quiet corner and the churchwarden's bonfire site, before rather wearily making our way up the path to the Rectory garden and Sara's magnificent and (we felt) well earned lunch, after which most of us returned to domestic duties, but the Rector, with Divine energy, visited the rest of the Benefice by way of Saxthorpe with Corpusty, Edgefield, Hempstead and Plumstead.

Thank you so much to all those members of the Benefice who sponsored us; it will make an enormous difference to the Benefice's efforts in supporting our community in these very trying circumstances.



St Mary's Baconsthorpe