

Wobbles, Tigers and Reminiscing

After many years of wanting to, I finally got to ride in a Sponsored Bike Ride.

Back in the eighties my father was an organizer of the ride and I would return home from Australia to find tables covered in leaflets, stickers, posters etc all waiting to be sorted and dispatched around Norfolk. I thought then what a great idea and what fun it would be to partake.

Several decades later, I happened to be in Norfolk at the time of the ride and I intrepidly got on my bike. (The last time I had ridden a bike I had fallen off and ended up in an ambulance). I was accompanied by very good friends Henry & Jill who have done all but two of the bike rides since they started, my son Charles and a friend Laurence. They were good company and a great support team encouraging me all the way.

The first few chosen churches were the ones nearby; Stokesby, Runham and Thrigby. The idea being that I could pull out at any point and never be far from home. After a few wobbles I started to enjoy myself and decided to go a bit further. On to Filby, Fleggburgh and Clippesby we went. The weather was turning, the sun had gone and rain was looking probable. We continued to Thurne, Repps, Martham and Rollesby where we stopped for lunch at the Tacon's Farm Shop. Then on to home arriving wet, as it did rain, tired and with a great sense of achievement. We had ridden over 30 miles!

It was such fun and what made it easy was that the ride was broken every few miles when we would stop at a church, get off our bikes, stretch our legs, look inside the building, talk to the locals and forget about the endurance test I had set ourselves. Thank you to those who welcomed us in to the churches and gave us refreshments. Much appreciated.

It was lovely to revisit churches not seen since my childhood. The last time I had been to the church in Runham it was closed and the BBC were filming 'Some Mothers do have 'em'. (Frank Spencer played by Michael Crawford was dressed as an angel and being propelled through the roof as part of the Christmas episode 1974). When at Thrigby, our sheets were signed at the Wildlife Park next door to the church and we got to see tigers, cranes, storks etc. through the fence. As a child I spent some time in Filby Church as I was friends with the rector's children and we would tag along, having fun ringing the bells, secretly tasting the unconsecrated communion wine, eating wafers, playing hide and seek etc. it was lovely to return and, find out that the bells are still being rung. St Peter's Clippesby is where my father is buried so I dropped by and had a few words. He would be so pleased to know that the work of the Trust continues. He was always involved, he never rode but on the day he always visited as many churches as possible to see how things were going and to meet the church recorders/sitters.

We visited only a few churches but nonetheless there was plenty to see in the way of variations in architecture, stained glass windows, naves, chancels, lecterns, fonts, pew ends and memorials often dating back as far as the medieval times. What history lies in these churches as well as examples of such skilled craftsmanship. Each one has so much to offer with insights into lives and times past and present. Preserving them is important to the community, the region and the country.

Thank you to all those involved.

Anna Anderson, Hay, Australia