

A PIG OF A RIDE!!!

A hop to the The Pigs public house in Edgefield. The Pigs is run by the same people who own the famous Byfords eatery in Holt, so you can pretty much guarantee it is an experience. This is probably the prettiest and most rural of all the routes offered by Huff & Puff Cycles. It passes an early eco-house and affords a chance to seek out a cycling vicar! PLEASE NOTE that The Pigs is closed on Mondays (except bank holidays).

DISTANCE: A circular route of around 18 miles.

CONDITIONS: You need to be reasonably fit and ready for a bit (not too much) of an adventure. The route twists and turns using quiet lanes and off-road tracks. It is not suited to cycles fitted with childseats or tags.

PLEASE TAKE CARE TO LOOK AHEAD FOR OBSTACLES WHEN RIDING ON TRAILS - AND ADVISE THOSE WHO ARE BEHIND YOU

Turn right on to the road out of the cycle hire centre and at the junction turn right again. Follow this road until it takes a sharp right, carry straight on at this point down a track with a sign saying 'No Tourers Beyond This Point'). Continue to the crossing of the North Norfolk Railway, cross over and continue straight on along the path.

Where the path meets the road turn left. At most times this road is fairly quiet, however if you have youngsters with you please keep them on your inside or ahead of you. The road is straight and visibility is good.

Continue on until you reach the crossroads, where you turn left. Ahead is a road bridge which crosses the North Norfolk Railway, but a couple of hundred yards before this keep an eye out for an almost concealed entrance on your left. This is Stonepit Plantation, a protected lowland heath which must be explored on foot (lock your cycles in the car park area). It's a habitat for lizards and slow worms.

Cross the railway bridge and continue along this straight stretch of road until you reach the T junction at the top of the road.

At the junction cross over the main Holt to Cromer road .Cross onto Selbrigg Road, then take the first right (signposted Hempstead).

As you travel this lane you will pass Selbrigg Pond on your left, a popular fishing spot. Follow this long lane to its end. At the crossroads (**CARE**) go straight over, signposted Hempstead. Shortly after entering Hempstead village you will pass Chapel Lane on your left - opposite is the gate entrance to the attractive and thatched All Saints Church.

Ignore Chapel Lane and continue straight on to take the next left into Marlpit Lane (signposted Plumstead/Aldborough). At the next t-junction turn right (signposted Edgefield), then next left (signposted Plumstead/Aldborough).

Around a quarter of a mile along this lane you will come across what is probably Norfolk's first eco-house (its roof is covered in sedum, a plant whose fleshy leaves absorb water) - if you miss it and end up in the next village you have gone a bit too far!

By the side of the eco-house (please don't stare, it's rude) is a Public Bridleway leading off to the right. Take this bridleway but please note that, although it is only short, it is a bit technical with some rutting and adverse cambers, and can be a little boggy in wet conditions.



(If you are not too confident as to your cycling skills then ignore this track and continue on into the next village, which is Plumstead. At the road junction turn right and follow this long lane) **(GO TO DETOUR JOINS HERE)**.

If you take the bridleway drop down the short hill **(GREAT CARE)** and at the bottom follow the grassy path to the left (watch out for ruts at the start... but it gets better!). At the junction with the road turn right **(DETOUR JOINS HERE)**.

Follow this long lane to its very end and, just as are about to join the main road to Holt turn left on the grass verge... et voila (that's French by the way)... you are at The Pigs!

Apart from enjoying some great local ales and food (or just a coffee), check out the quirky loos and the local produce shop... and traditional games, including petanque (French again, this is such an educational journey!). The Pigs is open from 11am to 2.30pm Tuesday to Saturday, and 12 noon to 3pm on Sundays and bank holiday Mondays (01263 587634).

Now the real off-road pain is about to begin, but you have been drinking at The Pigs so you probably won't feel a thing. But just in case you feel the need of a little extra salvation before embarking on this journey into a rural unknown, how about a short detour to seek out a cycling vicar... and a swig of Holy Water?

DETOUR... ON A WHEEL AND A PRAYER: Leave the pub and cross straight over the main road **(GREAT CARE)** and turn left on to the grass verge. At the road junction turn right and keep riding on until you reach the church of St Peter & Paul (it's less than half-a-mile). Enter the church and look for the vicar... if you can't find him, take a look at the end of this route sheet. (As for the swig of Holy Water you can fill your drinking bottles from a standpipe in the church grounds... it's near the gate leading to the car park... donations gladly received!).

Return to the main road once you have visited the church and cross straight over (signposted Byway to Barningham Green).

If you don't opt for the detour turn left on leaving the pub for just a few short yards on the main road **(CARE)** (or use the grass verge opposite), then turn left (signposted Byway to Barningham Green).

After a short while this lane drops down a small hill. At the bottom of the hill take the track on the left (it passes in front of a half-hidden house where you may be greeted by the alarm calls of peacocks... it is not certain whether they are protecting the house, or expressing concern at what you are about to encounter!).

The track becomes grassy (keep to the left for the easiest riding). Follow the track to the line of trees ahead, where it bears to the right (good views at this point). At the end of this track continue straight on, following the path through the dark wood (goblins, possibly). Follow this short grassy track through the wood (pick your line carefully, it has one or two boggy sections) then, as you emerge from the trees, keep straight on.

Pass the semi-derelict farm building (on your right) and at the next wood, turn right. As you emerge from the trees yet again, follow the track round to the right. After a short while you will pass a white painted cottage then, as the track bends to the right take a **HARD LEFT** into an almost hidden entrance to another track (if you reach the road you have gone just a bit too far... you are getting tired now but, please, pay attention).

SAFE RIDING NOTE: This section of track can be overgrown at times, but that's all part of the adventure! It is important to always look ahead at what is on the track... for example, as this track eventually widens the left side is lined with blackthorn bushes... the cyclist's worst enemy! If the blackthorn has been cut keep to the right, and even if it has not been cut keep an eye out for strays. It is a good idea to place an alert cyclist in the lead on this track (if one still exists after the pub) to warn of any dangers. This is no time to have a fit of the giggles.



Follow this long track to its junction with a road (at Plumstead village), then turn left. At the next junction (good grassy spot for a picnic) turn right, signposted Hempstead. Follow this lane until you once more reach the eco-house, but this time take the wide track on your right. Follow the track to the road, then turn left.

Aaah... the relief of smooth tarmac. But not for long... you are now embarked on a climb to Norfolk's second highest point (and the top of this first climb is not it!).

Enter the village of Baconsthorpe and follow the 'main' road. After the road bends sharply to the left take the next right (signposted Baconsthorpe Castle).

The road to the castle is straight on (it's about half-a-mile further on... and the subject of another 10-mile Huff & Puff ride)... but our route follows the road round to the right. At the next t-junction turn left.

Follow this lane to the lofty radio mast (that's Norfolk's second highest point!), then drop down the other side of the hill. At the t-junction turn left, then next right.

Follow this lane into the village of Bodham. At the t-junction turn left (or right for a few yards to visit the local Post Office stores).

At the crossroads with the main Holt to Cromer road go straight over (**GREAT CARE**). At the next junction turn right (by the garage) and follow this road for a half-a-mile or so until you reach the main entrance to Kelling Heath Holiday Park.

THE CYCLING VICAR... is depicted in the stained glass window on the wall opposite the entrance to the church. Canon Walter Hubert Macon was the rector of Edgefield for a long, long time, from 1875 to 1937. The legend on the window reads: 'I have ridden every bicycle high and low, with tyres wooden, solid and pneumatic.' (NB: High bicycles are more commonly known as penny-farthings).

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