**Bricks and Moretaine** 202km

Brevet de Randonneur Permanent

**Information**

This 202km Brevet de Randonneur permanent heads west from Braintree in Essex through Herts to Bedfordshire to take advantage of heading out into the prevailing westerly winds, returning when perhaps a little tired, with a tailwind. A Mid-Essex route allows local riders to start between controls, or even from home, with additional start/finish controls; convenience balanced by a few ‘bonus’ kilometres. The route can, of course, under AUK permanent rules, be started from its western end or ridden in reverse.

The recommended route deviates from the minimum distance AUK requirements, in order to avoid some potentially unpleasant roads and adds approximately another 13km to the route.

Re-fuelling and controlling opportunities, as well as potential hazards are marked on the route sheet. A ‘selfie’ by a recognisable landmark will be accepted as ‘proof of passage’, should all suitable options be unavailable.

Places of interest are also noted on the route sheet; highlights are:

* Wallbury Iron Age camp on the Essex/Herts border – three banks and ditches visible from the lane, [which in part runs on top of the first ditch and bank].
* Fords at Much Hadham and Barwick
* Watercress beds on the River Mimram chalk stream at Whitwell.
* A taste of the eastern edge of the Chiltern Hills.
* Millbrook Proving Ground [vehicle test track], on a reclaimed brickworks site.
* Marston Moretaine church [tower visible from Station Road, approach the village] – grade 1 listed, featuring a rare detached bell tower: cyclepath there, to L on outskirts, or via road from L @ T & L @ The Bell, [Church Walk].
* The ‘model village’ of Stewartby with its now defunct brickworks: originally Forder and Sons, later the London Brick Company, then Hanson. At one time it had the largest brick kiln in the world; also notable for exceptional leisure and sports facilities, plus housing for workers, many of whom were Italian ex-prisoners of war and refugees.

The four chimneys are listed buildings, a rare survivor of 167 brickworks chimneys in Marston Vale. The works closed in 2008 because of high sulphur dioxide emissions, due to the organic content of the local Oxford clay used in the bricks.

* Jordan’s Mill, of cereal-bar fame.
* Thaxed, because every Essex Audax should go through here.