Thetford Club Run Report – Spring 2026

One of the many little joys of arriving at a club run destination, is seeing what bikes are in the car park and who got there before you! On this occasion, quite a few members had made the trip up early to the historic 500-year-old Bell Hotel in Thetford on what was a wonderfully sunny afternoon. Chief among the earlier arrivals were Norman Hyde, Alan Halford and his daughter Louise who was his guest for the weekend. Not content with simply taking in the joys of Thetford with a gentle stroll around town, they had gone further by locating a mini beer festival at the nearby Black Horse Inn and, being the intrepid explorers that they are, a visit had to be made. As it would happen, Alan would make that same pub journey a further two times that day, but more of that later!

For this Run, organisers Rick Parish and Ian Kerr had come up with the excellent idea for all attendees to provide details of the bikes they were riding when they were checking into the hotel. Quite why no one else has thought to do this before is a mystery but it was a good move. Not such a good move was losing the list at some point over the weekend!

As many members know, this wasn't the first time that the club had visited Thetford and the Bell Hotel, as previous runs were held there in Spring 2006 and Spring 2017. For the benefit of younger members and new guests who weren't on the earlier Runs, the hotel was made famous by the BBC's classic sitcom *Dad's Army* between 1968 and 1977, when it served as the central hub and home-away-from-home for the principal cast members.

Rick and Ian had warned everyone beforehand that the hotel refresh that was due to be undertaken by Greene King after the last Run had not taken place yet (some 9 years later!) but this was offset by the excellent rates and the single rooms they had offered everyone for this Run. In truth, the hotel wasn't as bad as the organisers had made out – the staff were friendly, the food and ale were fine and there were few, if any, complaints about the cleanliness or comfort of the rooms so all was set for a super weekend.

Before long, and as more riders arrived, the outside patio area was buzzing with Club members and their guests enjoying a few pre-dinner drinks in the sun. Upon hearing about the mini-beer festival from Alan, and with plenty of time to spare before dinner, he and daughter Louise, Frank Finch and guest Eddie Roberts decided to take a walk into town to visit the aforementioned pub. Apparently the festival hadn't started when Alan had first visited but was now in full swing in the late afternoon sunshine. A couple of the splendid local ales were sampled and then it was time to head back to the hotel for dinner.

With everyone assembled, the Chairman and Run organisers ran through the usual formalities and guests were introduced (see list below). At this point, Chairman Alan revealed that he had intervened with Rick's original menu choices with the words; "If we told Norman that cheeseburger was a choice for the Saturday meal, he would have a fit!". As it transpired, the menu was tuned much more to what we are usually accustomed and comprised Minestrone soup or chicken strips, then roast chicken or nut roast and finally, apple crumble or chocolate fudge brownie.

For the quiz Ian Kerr had devised a fiendish set of questions (reproduced at the end of this report) which presented a considerable challenge for most people. The eventual winner was Martyn Roberts who was presented with a lovely plaque in memory of Nick Jeffery.

In what would later become the last ever Friday night Raffle, it was disappointing (again) that there were less raffle items than people but that didn't detract from the fun that was had by assigning (randomly of course) selected items to certain members. Graham Matcham did the MC honours, ably assisted by Gary Hartshorne. The one that probably sticks in most people's minds for some reason was a book on scooters that was mysteriously won by Neil Tuxworth to great applause!

Afterwards, with full bellies, most folk adjourned to the bar and outside patio for further networking. It was still a warm evening and with a queue at the hotel bar, Alan was quickly cajoled by Frank (accompanied by Graham Matcham and guest Shaun Jones) into making one last trip (his third that day!) into town to the beer festival to continue the sampling! A splendid evening rounded off in style with a full day's riding to look forward to on Saturday.

The next day we were greeted by a glorious morning sun and naturally everyone was keen to get riding again but before then, there was the challenge of breakfast. Following Rick's announcement on Friday evening that breakfast would be served from 7.30am, the usual front-runners were ready downstairs good and early but there was a slight hiccup when it transpired that the chef didn't start until 8am much to the frustration of the assembled masses! A check on the Run Report from our last visit on 2017 revealed that exactly the same situation had occurred then! There was however a selection of cold breakfast items like pastries, cereals and toast. This would normally have been sufficient for even the 'hangriest' folk but there was only one toaster which eventually failed after serving only a handful of guests. Still, this gave everyone plenty to talk about if nothing else. A short while later, the staff started serving hot breakfasts and all started to become well with the world!

Before long, all were present and correct in the car park at the appointed time for Rick to lead everyone off with Ian acting as TEC. The Run initially headed south-east through the lovely Norfolk countryside and the village of Ixworth before heading east towards the coast. The organisers had done a good job trying to find enjoyable but quiet country roads so that we could avoid the busier main roads but the local authorities seemed to have decided that this weekend was the optimum time to set up numerous road works and diversions which unfortunately turned out to be a recurring feature of the day. To be fair, Run leader Rick did a very creditable job in navigating and rerouting around these unexpected obstacles that are always a nightmare for organisers. Compounding the issue and slowing our average speeds yet further, was the fact that the sunny weather had brought out loads of extra cars that were determined, like us all, to enjoy the day. However, that was still preferable to riding in the rain all day!

Our first stop for refreshments was at Stonham Barns Park, a large garden centre just past Stowmarket. After over an hour's riding, the ample and easy parking and efficient tea/coffee ordering system made this a very pleasurable stop for everyone – everyone except Tom Waterer that is! Unfortunately, Tom had been in a world of his own and had puttered past the stop, missing the frantically waving marker, continuing further towards the coast on his Triumph 500. We were later reunited with him before the lunch stop so everything turned out well in the end.

Suitably refreshed, everyone continued riding eastwards and our first glimpse of the sea was at the elegant coastal market town of Aldeburgh. Turning northwards past some lovely seaside properties we were soon in Thorpeness and then heading to Leiston.

Rick had arranged multiple options around our lunchtime visit to the charming town of Leiston. Those that had attended his Run in 2017 had already visited the David Silver Honda Collection but were welcome to view again. The other point of interest was The Long Shop Museum conveniently placed across the road from our splendid lunch providers at The White Horse Hotel. Several of our members had become excited at the prospect of a visit to the Long Shop Museum as some online research beforehand revealed exhibits such as steam engines (in steam – i.e. operational) and many other engineering items from the past. Sadly, word filtered back that the museum was temporally closed for a few hours due to a boiler inspection. No members took up the museum staff's option of viewing only the few outside exhibits available as the full entry fee of £8 was still demanded.

Whilst most were having lunch al fresco in the hotel garden Rick and Ian, with some assistance with a few others, were pawing over phones and maps checking out closed roads affecting the route. At one point Rick even shot off to view some roadworks up the road that were causing concern. With some

diversions required to the route ahead and no stragglers in museums, it was fortunate that an earlier than planned departure time was able to be implemented.

With stomachs full (again!), the Run headed north towards Southwold and a quick stop at the pier. With the sun still beaming down on the righteous, it seemed only fitting to indulge in some ice creams which many riders chose to do. After such an excellent lunch, it wasn't strictly needed but it was a guilty pleasure.

At this point, you might be entertained by some interesting facts about the history of Southwold pier. It originally opened in 1900 as an 810-foot landing stage for steamships bringing tourists directly from London Bridge. Over the decades, it has survived severe storms, World War II bomb and sea mine damage, and near-demolition. A rebuild was completed in 1979 for the princely sum of £30,000. By comparison, today £30,000 would buy you about 6.5cm of HS2 railway line! I digress… After being privately purchased in 2001, a multimillion-pound restoration project was launched and in 2002, the pier was proudly awarded the National Piers Society's *Pier of the Year*!

Before long, the Run continued heading inland through more lovely Suffolk and Norfolk countryside towards Beccles and onwards to our afternoon stop at a charming country pub called the Huntingfield Arms. By coincidence, this was very near the village of, er, Huntingfield! We were still in the grip of a fantastic day's weather so some enjoyed their drinks outside in the sun while others put the world to rights in the cool inside shade. Either way, this was a very pleasant stop and precursor to what would be quite a fast run back to the hotel.

Another thing that always amazes is how quick some people can get back from a day's riding and appear back at the bar, freshly showered, suited and booted and ready for dinner in what seems like a matter of minutes. As ever, this was the case again and there was the usual mix outside of members still in their riding gear, chewing the fat with other members in their suits and Club ties. It always works out in the end though and by the time the hotel was ready to serve dinner, everyone was on parade as expected.

The dining choices this evening were halloumi fries or prawn cocktail, followed by Hunters chicken with chips and dressed salad (not cheeseburger!) or salmon fillet then vanilla cheesecake or ice cream for dessert. Norman had chosen the salmon but complained that it had no sauce. A lovely young waitress came back from the kitchen with a pot of garlic sauce which seemed agreeable with Norman so world order was thankfully restored! We were also spoiled with the option of cheese, biscuits and port to round out the dining experience, and very nice it was too!

After dinner, Chairman Alan thanked the organisers for what had been a super day despite the challenging road and traffic conditions and finally revealed our Sergeant at Arms, Steve Callahan. Steve started by proclaiming that this role was not a chore, but a pleasure (Ed: it might be a pleasure for him, less so for the rest of us when he relieves us of our cash!).

Speaking on behalf of everyone, he also praised Rick and Ian for a fantastic weekend including the glorious weather, then immediately proceeded to fine them as the previous week, Rick Parish had admitted that they hadn't planned or given any thought to the raffle, Sergeant at Arms or Scribe and fining them again for good measure for being gullible enough to believe the hotel was going to have a refit before our stay. There was, of course, another fine this time aimed solely at Ian Kerr, for suggesting that none of the speed limits we encountered or road closures were there the day before, and this was all because of the arrival of (his man crush) Jason Statham, who was filming locally.

Under the category of charity, the Sergeant went on to fine both Steve Lomas and Arthur MacDonald for wearing flamboyant shirts, smoking jackets, and boots that had clearly been bought in support of

charity shops but were not appropriate for club runs. Deception was the next category of villainy, and here, Gary Hartshorne was rightly fined for being half the man he was before, causing many of us to wonder who this strange chap was. Neil was accused of being a sheep in wolf's clothing, denying that his 350 scooter was just that and not a motorcycle, and going on to suggest that Honda had categorised it wrongly as a scooter as it was the best motorcycle he'd ever ridden in his life!

Martin Lambert was fined for trying to disguise his predictable green Kawasaki Versys by arriving on a black-and-white one that they had clearly been unable to sell. Steve Miller was fined for troubling the Sergeant with his first-world problems caused by not being able to decide which of his nine bikes he should ride and enquiring whether having nine bikes meant that he could qualify as a member, since a guy who thought a scooter was a motorbike had qualified as a member. Stephen Burgess was rightly fined and outed for being such a closet fan of the Caped Crusader that he had purchased a road-going Batmobile of his own, complete with flamethrower.

Nepotism was the next category where Andy Mayo and father Colin along with Alan Halford and daughter Louise were fined for not being able to find friends of their own age (despite this being a very nice thing to do within the club). Tom Waterer was the next target of the Sergeant who along with the rest of us had felt Tom had brought The Club into great disrespect by dropping oil from the bike he transported in a van onto one of the only parts of the hotel that wasn't likely to be demolished or refitted. He was fined again for the loss of his room key that was in his pocket, and riding straight past Frank, who was on point, waving frantically for the visually challenged Tom.

Nick Campolucci was fined in his absence for trying to bribe the Sergeant with £10 the previous night to let him off for what undoubtedly, he'd be fined for on Saturday. Under the heading of normally nice guys, Martin Roberts was rebuked and fined for suggesting that when he first met the Sergeant over 20 years ago, he thought of him as a young upstart until of course he shared a room with him when he thought he was an OK guy. Nick Hopkins, he of the Norton fame was fined twice - once for suggesting he would see a club member outside for dissing the Norton and secondly for placing his aforementioned bike in-between 2 cars on the run making it even more difficult for the rest of us to overtake him and the two equally slow cars. Somehow the Sergeant missed an obvious fine for Graham Goodman who was not indicating at the bar when he spun round knocking a drink from another member's hand. Cuckoos, another category, and this time it was Simon Belton and Roy Pinto who were the targets, citing that Roy changed employers like cuckoos change nests, as it was almost impossible to know where he'd next pop up. Also, Simon Belton, who'd been with the industry for many years but still hadn't managed to become a member despite living in a multitude of nests.

Rick Parish was fined yet again, but this time for his fading memory, suggesting that this venue back in 2006 was the Sergeant's first run when he was the guest of Dan, but in fact the Sergeant's first run was, of course, in 2005 when Rick Parish himself had introduced him. Now we don't know if it was this that had upset the Sergeant, but he clearly had Rick in his sights when he fined him again, this time for overtaking a red car and then brake testing the car at 30 mph, but such was the magnitude of the crime that the driver held his hand out for half a mile, giving Rick the bird. Shaun Jones was then fined for a very similar incident, overtaking a car only to brake sharply to turn off the road 50 yards later. Shaun was also to be fined for bringing more luggage than most take on a two-week vacation. Gareth Evans was fined twice - one for not telling his introducer his real name, unless Steven Burgess had forgotten and made one up! And also, for suggesting it would have been fun to steal Steve's keys earlier in the day.

Dan Sager, normally safe during such proceedings, was fined for attending a recent curry evening dressed as his idol from Thomas the tank engine (not sure who he meant but Dan has been known to control a station or two). Finally, the Sergeant decided to take pity on Roy and not fine him for what was a very serious travel anxiety condition for having 3 sat nav devices on his bike and directions taped

to the tank and explaining he never trusted sat-navs so always deferred to the written direction (a logic that would defy all I suspect). The Sergeant then took his seat to the applause and jeering of the membership, sipping on his well-earned pint (Ed: who wrote this?!).

After everyone had settled, mourning the loss of their pound coins (some more than others!), the Chairman again thanked the organisers for a fantastic fun weekend. This brought the 'formal' proceedings to a close and the inevitable rush to the bar ensued for final drinks and more tales of the day's exploits.

In the morning, the chef still hadn't got the memo about turning up a little earlier to cater for the early breakfast crowd but it mattered little given the amount of food consumed by all over the previous day or two! Before long, it was time for a swift Club meeting which was held in a nearby room and, just like that the Run was finished and the sound of motorcycles starting up meant that people had begun their homeward journeys, again bathed in warm morning sunshine.

Our Club Runs are very special, giving everyone a reason to ride at least twice a year and they also present a great opportunity for some gentle business networking and generally catching up with old friends and colleagues. Rick and Ian did the Club proud in continuing this long tradition and providing a Run in beautiful countryside with carefully curated stops and points of interest – thanks to both on a job well done.

This report was compiled by Frank Finch with contributions from Steve Callahan and Alan Halford. Photos from the Run can be viewed on the Club Website Gallery.

The Saturday Route – well, Rick's intended one anyway.

Members and Their Guests

Steve Callahan – Steve Miller
Paul Haskins – Jack Taylor
Alan Halford – Louise Halford
Frank Finch – Eddie Roberts
Graham Matcham – Shaun Jones
Gary Hartshorne – Simon Bulmer
Roy Pinto – Simon Belton
Stephen Burgess – Gareth Evans
Andy Mayo – Colin Mayo

Attendees and Their Machines

Name	Make	Model
Andy Mayo	Yamaha	Tracer 9 GT
Arthur Macdonald	KTM	1290 GT Superduke
Daniel Sager	Royal Enfield	Intercepter 650cc
Eddie Roberts	Ducati	Multistrada 1200S
Frank Finch	Yamaha	Tracer 9 GT
Gareth Evans	Ducati	DesertX
Gary Hartshorne	BMW	F900 GS Adventure
Graham Matcham	KTM	1090 Adventure R
Ian Kerr	Yamaha	Tracer 9 GT
Jack Taylor	BMW	S1000XR
Alan Halford	Triumph	Tiger 900 GT
Louise Halford	Honda	CB500F
Martin Lambert	Kawasaki	Versys 1100 SE
Martyn Roberts	Honda	NC750
Neil Tuxworth	Honda	Forza 350
Nick Campolucci	Kawasaki	Versys 1100 SE
Nick Hopkins	Norton	750 Commando
Norman Hyde	Triumph	Speed 400
Paul Haskins	Husqvarna	Norden 901
Rick Parish	Triumph	Trophy 1215
Roy Pinto	Yamaha	Tracer 900
Shaun Jones	Honda	Africa Twin
Simon Belton	Yamaha	Tracer 9 GT
Simon Bulmer	BMW	F900 GS
Stephen Burgess	BMW	R1300RT ASA
Steve Callahan	KTM	890 SMT
Steve Lomas	Moto Guzzi	V85TT
Steve Miller	BMW	R1300 RS
Tom Waterer	Triumph	TR5

Spring Run Quiz Norfolk 2026

Name the motorcycle manufacturer who used the following 10 slogans: -

1. Made like a gun……...
2. For the Ride……...
3. The Power of Dreams……...
4. Revs Your Heart……...
5. Live to Ride, Ride to Live…….
6. Make Life a Ride……
7. Way of Life……...
8. You meet the Nicest people on a…….
9. Let the Good Times Roll……
10. Ready to Race……...
11. What did BMW make before motorcycles?.....
12. In 1926 Ducati was founded, but what did it produce?.....
13. Moto Guzzi is located close to the shores of which Italian lake?.....
14. Where does their emblem come from?.....
15. Morini's first bike in 1946 was a copy of which machine?.....
16. MV Augusta started out building what?.....
17. MZ was formed from which innovative East German manufacturer?.....
18. Who was the oldest Motorcycle manufacturer in Japan until it was bought out in 1961?.....
19. Which company is credited with the first V8 motorcycle?.....
20. What was the name of the Japanese Harley Davidson Copy built in the 1920's?.....

Answers:-

1.Royal Enfield 2.Triumph 3.Honda 4.Yamaha 5.Harley Davidson 6.BMW 7.Suzuki 8. Honda 9.Kawasaki 10.KTM 11.Aircraft Manufacturer 12.Radio Equipment 13.Lake Como 14.Winged Eagle (symbolising their aviation roots) 15.DKW (Yamaha Bantam etc). 16.Planes 17.DKW 18.Meguro 19.Glen Curtiss in 1906 20.Rikuo

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