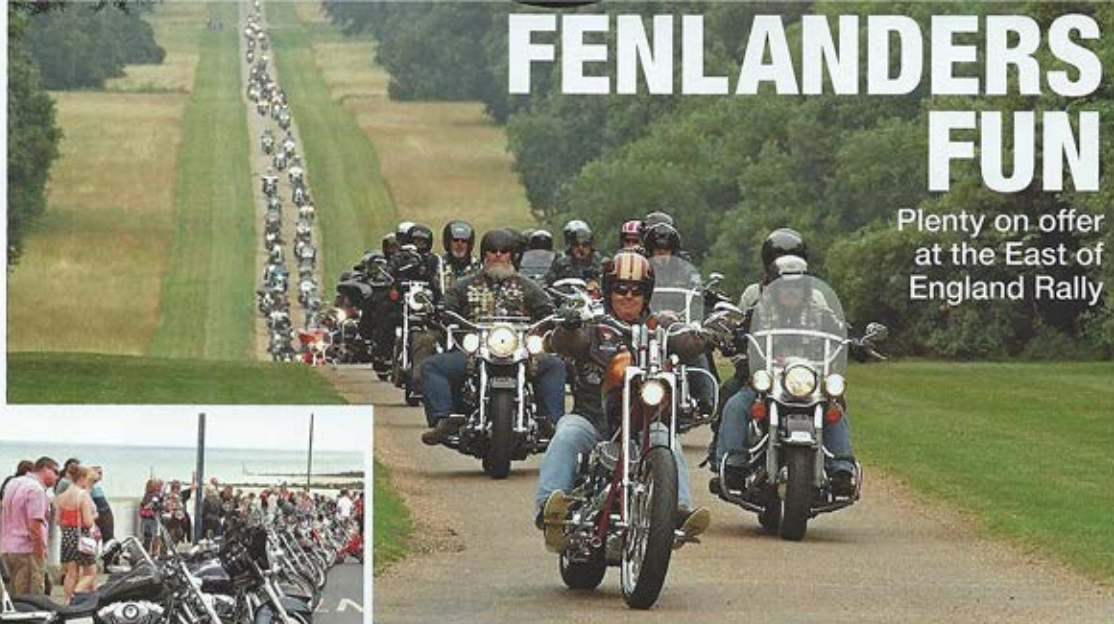


FENLANDERS FUN

Plenty on offer at the East of England Rally



REVIEW

H.O.G.® has long had an association with horse racecourses as rally venues. The first European H.O.G. Rally took place at Cheltenham Racecourse 23 years ago. Fakenham Racecourse was the venue for the East of England Rally in late July. Organised by The Fenlanders H.O.G. Chapter, it is in its 22nd year, initiated the year after that historic Cheltenham get-together. It has a proud history and tradition to look back on and also to build upon.

No two H.O.G. rallies are alike. Each has its own individual characteristics – sometimes driven by the landscape, location and local traditions. The Fenlanders may famously come from a flat landscape, but it is full of character nevertheless. The proximity of Fakenham to the North Norfolk coast is a great advantage when organising a mass ride-out. The ride-out on Friday took a circuitous route around the local area, threading its way through picturesque Norfolk villages and passing by huge fields of crops ripe in the midsummer sun. The destination was Thursford Steam Museum. A leisurely lunch was taken in the verdant gardens of the

museum, which also had an olde-worlde ice cream parlour. It did good business thanks to the hot weather. On Friday evening the 'Lingerie Ride' took place, another tradition of the East of England rally. One would think it a good excuse to get the camera out and photograph ladies in their skimpies, but in reality most of the riders wearing bras, knickers and stockings were biker boys, a few accompanied by their brave lady friends. The only thing suitable to follow was a stiff drink and some good music, both on offer in the large centre marquee.

On Saturday the big parade ride went to the seaside town of Sheringham, the route passing through the grounds of Holkham Hall, which boasts a one-and-a-half mile-long driveway, rising up the only hill for miles around to an obelisk. As the first riders passed the obelisk it was quite a sight as a skein of riders filled the mile-and-a-half driveway behind them, headlights twinkling in the morning mist. The parade then took the north coast road to Sheringham where a street party awaited its arrival. It was apparent that the residents and holidaymakers were well aware of the impending H.O.G. invasion as they packed the streets three or four deep, cameras and iPhones ready to capture the spectacle. They were not to be disappointed as the

bikers filled the little streets to capacity. There was a feeling of goodwill between the riders and the public lining all of the streets and a lot of banter was swapped as the Mayor of Sheringham welcomed them all. The Town Crier, resplendent in his red uniform, rang his bell, barely audible over the rumble of exhaust pipes. Bands played outside pubs and the famous fish and chip shops worked hard to supply the extra demand. Riders chatted to holidaymakers, kids sitting on their bikes for photos. Hollister this was not. The bike show was held in Sheringham and the best bike was chosen by a people's vote. Best in Show was awarded to Gary France's (Meridian Chapter) long-forked chopper, which certainly was the most extreme custom Harley® at the rally. Money raised went to the Sheringham RNLI.

The headline band on Saturday night, League Of Mentalmen, finished things off on a high note with a crescendo of punk rock interpretations of well-known songs and a suitably manic stage act. If you haven't yet been to the East of England give it serious consideration. You can be sure that the Fenlanders will welcome you and you'll have a rally experience like no other!

■ Garry Stuart

www.fenlandershog.com