

Welcome sight – 59 miles after leaving London, tired riders finally cross the finishing line in Priory Park, Southend

# Riders raise a record amount



■ We did it – Leigh couple Marshall and Hayley Williams celebrate their feat

**T**HOUSANDS of cyclists pedalled their way from London to Southend in yesterday's annual British Heart Foundation charity bike ride.

By **JON AUSTIN**  
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Road Cycling Club. He said: "It was a good ride. They changed the route a bit this time, so it didn't come through Ashingdon High Street and there was less traffic."

"Even going through London at the start was pretty clear."

"It was windy, though, and the last five miles or so were tough – straight into a head wind."

Organisers hope this year's ride will raise £150,000 for charity – £10,000 more than the £140,000 raised each time in recent years.

Upon arrival, the saddle-sore fundraisers who made it all the way to Priory Park were treated to refreshments, live music and a welcome sports massage to ease tired muscles.

The event is not a race, so there were no winners – except for the charity and anyone who might enjoy the chance to appreciate a ride in the countryside.

Robert Dowsett, 45, of Stock Road, Billericay, rode the course with his wife and two children.

He said: The furthest I had done before was 35 miles, so it was quite tough.

My legs are stiff, but it was really enjoyable and I would definitely do it again."

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The 59-mile ride, from Victoria Park, in Tower Hamlets, to Priory Park, Southend was the tenth such event and attracted more than 3,800 riders, some in fancy dress.

They all took a winding and demanding route through the back lanes and villages of Essex, raising thousands of pounds for charity in the process.

Tony Griffiths, 46, of Oakdene Road, Pitsea, has ridden the event a number of times with the Essex



■ Easy riders – these experienced cyclists from the Southend Wheelers bike club took the the distance in their stride



in, Shane Stevens and Tony Griffiths