

A long weekend in Rural Essex; Oct 2014 part 1

Bluebell the motorhome is currently parked up on a lovely field behind BritStop number 209. We aren't too far from either Halstead or Braintree and the sun is shining for us all to enjoy.



Yesterday was my birthday and to celebrate we chose a nice looking Brit Stop to book in-to for a splash out meal. We chose number 210, a vineyard/restaurant in Essex, and had a pleasant hours journey through the country-

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side to get there.

The BritStop itself didn't disappoint one bit- as soon as we arrived we knew we were going to enjoy ourselves!



Bluebell parked amongst the recently harvested vines

After a quick sandwich for lunch we took ourselves for a leg stretch down to the very pretty village of Coggeshall. The village itself is quite large and is home to 3 pubs, some nice shops, a couple of nice looking restaurants and tea rooms. Pretty much every single property is listed and we spent a very happy couple of hours doing the well designed Coggeshall town walk (leaflet ob-

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tained from the library) which took in all the main sights.



***The very pretty Paycockes NT property-
a former wool merchants house***



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The colours around the river were breathtaking especially once the sun peeped out.



Another highlight was a cheeky look into Grange Barn, another NT property in the village. Grange barn is an 800 year old barn, with huge timber roof- in fact it's the largest and oldest in Europe. I say *sneaked* as the lady was closing up for the night and let us peep round without charging us! Thank you nice lady.

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After a couple of refreshment stops we tottered back to the van to get in our glad rags ready for our big night out. Keefy had arranged a private wine tasting followed by dinner. He'd even booked the best table in the house <3



I cannot put into words how much I LOVED the entire night- many many thanks to our wonderful hosts, we had such a great time. The wine, of which we tried 3 English whites (the one from that vineyard was particularly good), an English rose, an English red (from

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a Norfolk vineyard down the road- which was superb!) and their own sparking wine which was fantastic. The girl conducting the tasting was knowledgable, friendly and patient and we supped our way through fair amount of wine! A nice touch was the complementary glass of fizz we each received as a birthday treat from the lady afterwards, as an aperitif. Delicious.

We had a lip smackingly great 3 course meal. I had goats cheese, beetroot, pickled Apple and walnut salad to start - a lovely reminder of food we enjoyed in The Dordogne region of France, followed by fish tagine- too good for words, and white chocolate and cappuccino cheesecake. Keefy enjoyed squid to start, homemade chicken schnitzel with hen

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egg on top and the best sticky toffee pud (with rum sauce) that he's ever had. We washed the meal down with a bottle of their 2013 white- the whole experience was perfection.

If you love good quality local food and wine you NEED to visit this place ^ Look it up in your Brit Stop book- number 210- and if you aren't a member then go buy a book www.britstops.co.uk so you can be in on the secret. And if you haven't been convinced yet..... How's this for a morning view from bed???



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The morning after the night before...

How do you top an evening like we had? We took full advantage of the Autumn sunshine and hit the road to Braintree, where we joined the Flint Way- a 7.5mile off road, traffic free cycle route along an old disused railway line.

A particular highlight was the station at Rayes which despite being redundant for many years now, still captured the feel of a busy working railway by having a disused carriage set up at the station as a museum and a busy cafe housed within the old station building.



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Further along the line was another old station, this time Bannister Green Holt, which proved to be a nice place for a picnic.



The scenery along the whole route was lovely and it was a really nice way to burn off some of the cobwebs from last night's tasting!!



The 15 mile cycle nearly finished us off- so

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once we arrived at our Brit stop for this evening we had a major chill, and a couple of pints in the pub. We are shattered after our eventful couple of days so an early night is planned with the intention of a nice walk tomorrow.

Until next time

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