

Sheila's Wheelers JOG-LE

A journey of 907 miles by cycle in honour of Cecelia Hurdman



Sheila's Wheelers

This work is the property of Sheila's Wheelers End to End Team: Bryn Edwards,
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About this Journal

Well what do you need to know?

This journal is an account of the charity cycle ride that we organised and rode from John O'Groats to Land's End. My cycle computer put this at 907 miles which we covered over 13 days setting off from JOG on Friday the 14th of July 2006 and arriving in LE on Wednesday the 26th of July 2006.

It has been written by me, Gary Hurdman. I am one of the Sheila's Wheelers team members and it was I that created the Sheila's Wheelers website: -

<http://www.hotshot-it.co.uk/sw/>

I have written this account from my perspective, in the first person. However, this doesn't mean that this doesn't represent the rest of the team. Wherever there is a thank you to someone that helped or donated, it's from us all. Opinions of course are mine. Other team members wanted to voice their own opinions or thoughts and the owner of such ramblings are named and shamed. All other incoherent ramblings are mine. Any errors are mine too, don't blame the other guys!

I have organised this account (organised, surely not?) into two parts. A journal and a guide detailing our route, accommodation and planning to aid anybody else thinking of cycling the End to End challenge for the first time. It's not a complete guide and will only discuss our experience but I hope it helps anyone that might be thinking of taking on the End to End challenge.

Enjoy the read.

Once you get through this and you find you did enjoy the read, please consider donating to our charities. Even a small amount.

And if you didn't enjoy reading this journal, which put my entire literary soul into, well you can just go and get stuffed >o)

Gary Hurdman.

Glossary

A list of abbreviations and terms that are used in this document.

BCH: Birmingham Childrens Hospital

BLF: British Lung Foundation

CRUK: Cancer Research UK

CTC: Cyclists' Touring Club

E2E: End to End

JOG: John O'Groats

JOGL: John O'Groats to Land's End

LE: Land's End

LEJOG: Land's End to John O'Groats

NCN: National Cycle Network

Newfie: An affectionate term given to somebody originating from Newfoundland.

NCTS: National Cycle Training Standard. Government initiative in training for cycle safety on the roads.

Stack: Slang term for a cycling accident (mainly used by Mountain Bikers)

Acknowledgements

Where do I start?

There are plenty of people to thank.

On a very self indulgent and personal note I would first like to thank my wife Lisa, for not just putting up with every harebrained scheme I come up with, but supporting me through them no matter how idiotic the scheme may be. She gave up her time and some of our family budget to make this ride possible. Thanks Duck!

I would also like to thank the other 4 members of the team. You made a great experience greater, you dealt with the tough times with great calmness and put up with my grumpiness when things went wrong. You got cracking.

Matt would like to thank his wife Sue for giving him his leave from the housework to go training.

Also his kids, Holly and Bradley for being his motivation for pedalling faster so that he'd see them sooner.

The four riders of the team are very much in debt to our team member Bryn Edwards, who gave up annual leave entitlement and hard cash to drive a van in support of the trip. It just wouldn't have been possible without you. Many thanks.

Bryn would like to offer thanks in the following: -

"I'd like to thank everyone who helped us - whether it was the staff and customers at the Leap or the relatives, friends, workmates who made donations. The people who went out of their way to help and support, the drivers who were courteous and Gary will eventually forgive those who weren't, those who offered encouragement. In fact everyone who supported and helped us, whether their contribution was large or small they were all very very much appreciated and they are not forgotten. Thank you all. (now where do I pick up the award?)"

We would all like to thank the following: -

Former Gold Commonwealth cyclist Keith Reynolds for the training advice passed through Sheila's Wheeler Matt and for keeping his mouth shut regarding our unprepared state before the ride. The power of mind over matter eh?

Rob and Joe for their excellent guide (the style of which has been plagiarised mercilessly in this account) to cycling End to End was a great planning tool for our trip. Thanks for making it available to all for free. <http://www.beewee.co.uk/JOGLE2005index.htm>

Best Connection Group for the publicity and the funds the staff raised in aid of our charities.

Flora Van Hire and Controlled Scaffolding for sponsoring the van used to support the ride.

The staff and patrons of the Deer's Leap Public House in Kingstanding took part in family fund raising days, raffles and sponsorship raising an enormous amount of money. You're good, good people.

The staff and patrons of the Great Barr Club who raised sponsorship. You too are good people.

The staff at Leisure Lakes Bowling in Crewe who donated a couple of games of Ten Pin Bowling and a couple of rounds of drinks. The only late night we had during the ride was this one. We had a great evening, ta!

The many people we met en-route who helped or donated to our charities. We were constantly amazed at how trusting and generous the people of Great Britain are.

Fred Williams Cycles in Wolverhampton for the excellent advice on cycle gear and very reasonable prices.

The Great British Weather. It was perhaps a little too hot, but it was nice. For two whole weeks. Just a few spots of rain. So ta!

The friends and family who came out to visit us as we arrived in Ludlow, Mick and Jan Gough, Tom Lafferty, Sharon and Andy Hodgets, Keith Mayers, Karen Mayers. It was a great moral boost to spend an evening with you during the ride. A special thank you to Mick who bought us our evening meal and asked us to donate the cost of our meals to our charities. And also to Tom who supplied the Sheila's Wheelers T-shirts.

The welcome party at Land's End which included Terry and Libby Clews, Jessica "Kicka" Clews, Susan Clews, Val, Rob, Lucy and Sam Poxon, Carl and Trudy Mayers, Lisa Hurdman, Susan, Holly and Bradley Leech, Vicky Hurdman, Tom Lafferty, Mary, Aiden and Christie Lafferty.

Thanks to all our sponsors. Many, many thanks.

Sheila Hurdman

This picture is how our family will probably remember Mum. This is the last time that much of her family and friends met her, at a family party she arranged for My Dad's 60th and my Sister's 21st. This night was a great family get-together, we all swapped the stories that we had to share since our last meeting. We all ate and drank to excess. In the days following this party, family members all commented what a great night it was. Mum glowed on this night.

People plan parties all the time, so why was this such a big deal? Well mum was quite ill with Fibrosing Alviolitis which meant she was on oxygen for most of the day and night, in fact, in the run up to this party, Mum was using the oxygen concentrator close to 24 hours a day. She was unable to get out and about and her mobility was limited by the little electric mobility scooter that she terrorised the residents of Great Barr with.

But even with the scooter, Mum had difficulty planning a trip to the local shops because of her dependency on the extra oxygen, so planning a huge surprise party for my Dad and one of my Sisters was a big deal. Dad and Vicky were caught out a treat because they thought she couldn't manage to organise any event

However, Mum was determined to see the occasion celebrated. And we, as her family, will be eternally grateful that she gave us such a great night to remember her by. Because sadly, just 10 days later Mum lost her fight with her illness.

That party did more than leave us with fond memories, it summed up my Mum's courage and awareness of life. Though Mum suffered with a serious illness, it never defined her. Mum managed to show us the real person and not a person trapped by lung disorder. I'm not saying Mum didn't have her down days, but don't we all. For most people the only signs of her illness was the equipment she came to rely on, the oxygen and the mobility scooter. Without those things that Mum used to trivialise with humour (and she really was a terror on that scooter, I still expect to see a speeding fine come through with a photo of Mum in a speeding blur on her scooter) nobody would know she had been ill

So thanks Mum. Thanks for saying goodbye with the best night we've had in years. It meant we knew you were at peace. It meant we knew you were happy.



Mum was born in St John's, Newfoundland on the 14th of December 1947 to an English mother and Canadian father. It surprised me how few people knew about Mothers nationality. Her Canadian ancestry was something she was quite proud of. Moving to England as a child she grew in post war Bordesley Green. The name Cecelia was considered "too" Canadian so Sheila was thought to be an English translation. Bordesley Green was not the most prosperous of areas, and being joined by a brother and sister meant that money was tight and her childhood tougher than we might expect of working families today. She met my Dad when she was just 16. I think they got on quite well because when I appeared on the scene, Mum was just 21. I think mother was keen on enjoying life in a larger family because Sue followed 5 years later, and Vicky 11 years after that. Sadly, in between me and Vicky mum suffered 4 miscarriages which devastated my her. However, as a child, I never knew how these unfortunate events hurt my mother. She was as brave then as she was with her illness at the end.

Certain things will always remind me of Mum. She enjoyed needle work. From clothing to a plastic bag recycling tube, we have been on the receiving end of Mum's handiwork. My house would probably be without curtains if it wasn't for Mum. And I think there are 3 words that will bring a smile to the face of anyone that knew her, they are "Car Boot Sale". Oh how she loved buying other peoples rubbish! But somehow Mum's practical skills would turn that rubbish into something that would grace the most stately of homes. Every time I hear the Everley Brothers I'll think of Mum. She enjoyed her music. Freddie and the Dreamers being another favourite band from her youth. She had the pleasure of meeting Freddie Garrity a couple of years back.

On the 17th of January 2006, Mum left behind a good number of people who'll miss her. Edward, her Husband. Me (Gary), Susan and Vicky her Children. Anne and Roy, her siblings. And of course, her extended family and many friends.

So, Goodbye Mum. And know that for two weeks in July 2006, 5 men and a flat paper boy considered themselves Newfie.

The Charities

We wanted to raise funds for charities that would honour Mum's memory. The chosen charities perform sterling work and we would like you to support their work.

Before Mum left us, I told her that my cycle ride would raise funds for the British Lung Foundation. Matt and Dan chose charities that Mum supported. The Birmingham Children's Hospital treated Holly and Bradley, Mothers grandchildren shortly after birth and as Matt is their Dad, he chose to raise funds for them. Dan's family has been touched by Cancer, and chose to raise funds for Cancer Research UK. As Mum was treated for Breast Cancer, she would have approved of his choice.

The British Lung Foundation

Dear old Mum suffered with Fibrosing Alviolitis. The BLF offered much support and advice <http://www.blf-uk.org/>

Birmingham Children's Hospital

Holly and Bradley both required care soon after birth. As Matt is their Dad he needed no time at all to choose a charity to raise funds for. Mum, as Holly and Bradley's Grandmother would second his choice.

<http://www.bch.org.uk/departments/fundraising.htm>

Cancer Research UK

A while back Mum was treated for breast cancer. She would have been proud of Dan's chosen charity

Please support our charities.

<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/>

Team Members

Sheila's Wheelers are a team made of the following people.



"Flat" Stanley Lambchop Esq

Position:

Rider. Team Leader. Pace Setter

Occupation:

Limbo World Champion. Being flat has it's advantages

But you would really like to be a:
bit fatter (doesn't Gary have some to spare?)

Most Looking forward to:

Watching the rest of the team crumble behind me as my flat little legs pedal round like a dervish.

Least Looking Forward to:

Being stuffed in an envelope for my trip back to the States. Why are you people too tight to book me a seat?

Most likely to say:

Amy, come get me, they're making me cycle the whole country!

Least Likely to say: I'm the ugliest member of the team

Who are you most likely to assault on this ride?:

The whole team. And soon. With a large blunt object. Mwwwaa haaaa haaa haaa .

..



Bryn Edwards

Position:

Support Driver, Navigator and Morale Officer (If morale gets too high I have to bring it down to the miserable level)

Occupation:

Trainer

But you would really like to be a:
Tree leaf counter

Most Looking forward to:

Christmas

Least Looking Forward to:

Old Age

Most likely to say:

I'm right and you're wrong

Least Likely to say:

You're right and I'm wrong

Who are you most likely to assault on this ride?:

Three legged hedgehogs



Edward Hurdman

Position:

Rider.

Occupation:

Medical Technologist (That is what it say's on my wage slip, I can't help it)

But you would really like to be a:

Cyclist

Most Looking forward to:

Lands End in sight. Just one mile to go.

Yipeeee

Least Looking Forward to:

My knees swelling up, a saddle sore back side .Going up the side of Ben Nevis (err, not by our route - editor/webmaster)

Most likely to say:

This is great, down hill for the next ten mile (sorry, not by our route again - editor/webmaster)

Least Likely to say:

Bryn 's a nice chap

Who are you most likely to assault on this ride?:

Bryn, he thinks he is right all the time ,but he 's not. I AM



Gary Hurdman

Position:

Rider. Probably at the back. Way back.

Occupation:

Software Engineer

But you would really like to be a:

Ballet Dancer or a job in which I'm allowed to wear womens clothes.

Most Looking forward to:

The rest breaks

Least Looking Forward to:

Riding down wind of Matt following a baked bean lunch.

Most likely to say:

Is it normal for your @rse to go entirely numb?

Least Likely to say:

Come on guys, catch up.

Who are you most likely to assault on this ride?:

The first person to comment on my Lycra shorts.



Daniel Lafferty

Position:

Rider.

Occupation:

All round buidling kinda geezer

But you would really like to be a:

Man

Most Looking forward to:

Showing how silky my legs look in Lycra

Least Looking Forward to:

Showing how silky my legs look in Lycra,
my cross dressing secret may be outed.

Most likely to say:

Lycra is your friend

Least Likely to say:

Does my bum look big in this?

**Who are you most likely to assault on
this ride?:**

Anyone I catch looking at my bra



Matthew Leech

Position:

Rider.

Occupation:

Recruitment Manager

But you would really like to be a:

professional cyclist so I could do this
without breaking a sweat

Most Looking forward to:

Lots of alcohol at Lands End

Least Looking Forward to:

Getting on my bike

Most likely to say:

Where's the pub?

Least Likely to say:

Isn't this fun?

**Who are you most likely to assault on
this ride?:**

My Saddle

The Route



Our Route took us through: **John O'Groats**, Wick, Dunbeath, Helmsdale, Brora, **Tain**, Invergordon, Dingwall, Beaulie, Drumnadrochit, Fort Augustus, Spean Bridge, **Fort William**, Inchree, Glencoe, Bridge Of Orchy, Crainlarich, Tarbet, **Luss**, Balloch, Glasgow, Hamilton, Larkhall, Uddington, **Abington**, Beattock, Lockerbie, Gretna Green, **Carlisle**, High Hesketh, Penrith, Shap, Tebay, Firbank, Middleton, Kirby Lonsdale, Clapham, **Settle**, Wigglesworth, Clitheroe, Blackburn, Bolton, Culceth, **Cuddington**, Whitchurch Wem, Shrewsbury, Church Stretton, **Ludlow**, Stockton, Bowley, Burley Gate, Newent Gloucester, **Stroud**, Stinchcombe, Bristol, Lower Langford, Brent Knoll, Bridgwater, **Taunton**, Wellington, Cullompton, Silvertown, Crediton, Copplestone, **Okehampton**, Lewdon, Lifton, Launceston, Camleford, Wadebridge, St Column Major, **Newquay**, Goonhaven, Redruth, Cambourne, Hayle, Penzance, **Land's End**.

Ride Diary

Thursday 13th of July

Today we set off at 6:30 from my house in Great Barr, heading north for Thurso, near John O'Groats. We had been given a van for support and transport of bikes from Flora Vehicle Hire and sponsored by Control Scaffolding Systems. Thanks guys.

My wife waved us off with a smile and a cool bag full of food for our lunch. Cheers wife. (she looks after me y'know). I remember worrying that she seemed a little too happy to see me go. Hmmm

We had an overpriced and overcooked breakfast at a service station in Carlisle just a few hours later and we were making good time. We rock!

The further north we got, the more picturesque the scenery became. We passed by many famous landmarks and through some great countryside. A highlight for me was passing over the Forth Bridge, quite an impressive work of industrial art.

Up near Inverness we stopped for and opened up the cool bag for a light snack. It seems my Wife has discovered the secrets of the Time Lords and managed to fit enough food to feed an army into a small cool bag. Some of the food lasted until the next day.

On this next leg of the journey, we noticed that we seemed to be driving down some rather steep hills. Hills we would have to climb while cycling. I think we all started to doubt our abilities as the van was slipped into an incredibly low gear and we heard the brake discs moan under the strain.

13 hours after setting off, we arrived at the Waterside Guest House in Janet Street, Thurso. We checked in to two rooms, Dad and Bryn shared one room and myself, Dan and Matt shared another. So we popped off to the Central Hotel in Thurso for food (and beer, though not too much, we were worried about the effect alcohol would have on our cycling performance).



The team enjoying an evening drink at the Central Hotel in Thurso

Friday the 14th of July.

We decided to get up at 6:00 am for an early push off from JOG. Funny mishap number 1. We awoke to a knock on the door and when it was opened, nobody was there. Then we got another knock on the door and this time my Dad was stood there, dressed and ready for the pedal off.

"What are you doing Dad?"

"It's 7 o'clock and we're up late, let's get cracking"

"We're up 2 hours early, it's 4 o'clock."

"What? Bryns in the shower!". Dad disappeared back back to his room.



Crossing the start line.

It turns out that Bryn woke up and looked at his watch before putting on his glasses, he woke Dad up and between the two of them ended up in a panic. Hmmm.

We arrive at John O'Groats (following a further 2 hours in bed) and find it deserted. Not sure what I expected, but I found a ghost town. Or rather, a couple of ghost buildings. There isn't very much at John O'Groats beside a stick (which normally carries a location sign, but the photographer owns it and he took it home with him).

Matt remembers getting ready for the off. "Start of the ride was pure excitement and anticipation and wanting to get Cracking:) There was also a belly full of butterflies as we drove to John O'Groats thinking oh my god this is it!"

We took some pictures, had a quick bike and equipment check then after Dad telling us that "we ought to get cracking" for the 20th time, we set off.

The scenery is wonderful, hardly a person in sight. I think this is as remote as it gets in the UK so there probably won't be any excitement for a while. Maybe even days.

Mile 10. Dan's knee explodes. Alright I'm being dramatic, but his knee is giving him a great deal of pain. Not to worry, just another 13 days of cycling and 900 miles to go.

Mile 18. We enter the twilight zone. As we cycled through the middle of nowhere a cyclist traveling in the other direction asks "Are you Sheila's Wheelers?". We feel famous. But the encounter isn't all that surreal, it turns out we have just bumped into Mick. Mick is a guy also cycling E2E with whom I corresponded via the internet while researching routes. He set off from Cornwall and is arriving at his halfway point of John O'Groats. Half way because he is cycling back to Cornwall. We had a quick chat with Mick and set off again. As he planned to finish at Land's End before us, we wondered if we might bump into Mick later in our journey.

Oh and Dan has slowed down a bit. His cycling technique looks a little strange too as he tries to find a pain free method of cycling.

So far from enjoying a tame start to our ride, things have already warmed up.

We cycle through Wick and head off to Helmsdale. Berridale Brae is in-between Wick and Helmsdale. It is rather bitter sweet. Sweet is how we felt when we clocked 47 mph heading down the valley. Bitter is how we felt as our lungs exploded on the uphill climb



Berridale Braes. A test for any cyclist

the other side of the valley. I needed a rest stop halfway up. Matt cycled to the top non stop at quite a pace. It took him a while to recover and was lucky not to vomit. He thought he'd pushed it a little too hard there. It turned out to be the hardest climb of the trip. At least it was on the first day.

We met up with Bryn for lunch at Helmsdale. I think it is here where we all got sunburned. Bryn went to explore the harbour and took the van keys with him.

The sun block which we had been so careful to pack was locked in the van. We all turned a nice shade of red and then started cycling again. At least we should be easy to spot by motorists now.

The rest of the ride got a little tougher as we got a little more tired and we were glad to arrive in Tain where our next B&B was to be found. This B&B is highly recommended if you need a place to stay in the area and the owners were very accommodating with us and our bikes, which they locked in their garage overnight.

Tain is a wonderful little town and we enjoyed our stay. We ate our evening meal in the Royal Hotel. I tried Haggis for the first time and y'know, I really enjoyed it.

We also enjoyed a pint or two of the local Ales. McEwen's 90 Shillings is a great pint.

The Royal Hotel put on some entertainment of what appeared to be a duo comprising of (I'm guessing) a husband and wife. They were a bit cheesy, and seemed to have Black Lace as their style role models, but they were excellent fun.

Saturday the 15th of July

Up early because Dad was complaining that we needed "to get cracking". We took some route advice from our very friendly landlord and set off. Putting our arses in the saddle today was an unpleasant experience and as each of us sat down, it was accompanied by either a scream or a moan.

Some way down the road, Matt felt that his fingers were too long and tried to remove the ends by putting them in his front spokes as we cycled towards Inverness. He claims that he was trying to adjust the sensor on his cycle computer but I'm not convinced, I reckon it's a finger length and vanity thing.

And then we clock our first 100 miles. We take a few pictures at the 100 mile mark and

then continue on our way. Our plan was to cycle through Inverness on the A9. We were delayed by Matt as he stopped to rescue a pheasant on the dual carriageway on the approach to the Black Isle. Before he was able to pick up the bird, a Mondeo put it down. It was a nice thought though Matt. While mourning the bird, we bumped into another cyclist who advises us against cycling the A9. On his friendly advice we re-routed towards Dingwall and Beaulie, heading for Loch Ness.

Well what a swine that cyclist turned out to be. He sent us on some killer climbs that our original route was designed to avoid. On the upside, we were cycling through some stunning countryside and this aesthetic compensation was more than worth the climbs.



Dan, Dad and Matt celebrate the first 100 miles

We decided it was time for a mid morning break and upon reaching the Ord of Muir we found a hotel and enquired about a cup of tea only to find that they wouldn't be open for another hour or so. We asked for directions to a cafe only to be told that we shouldn't worry, they'll open up the hotel lounge for us. We thought this to be overwhelming hospitality.

Continuing our journey towards Loch Ness we travelled across more stunning country side and up some rather severe hills until we arrived at Drumnadrochit where we

enjoyed the benefit of climbing with a mile or so of downhill cycling, some of it steep enough to be a tad scary. We met up with Bryn and had lunch.

We left Drumnadrochit to the sound of a solitary piper. What a racket, I'm not really a fan of bagpipes. Before long we sighted our first glimpse of Loch Ness and then Urquhart Castle. We cycled down the shores of the Loch for the next couple of hours or so. The A82 isn't the most cycle friendly of roads and the traffic movement did get a little hairy at times, but in spite of this, it was quite a pleasant ride.

At Fort Augustus we crossed a bridge under which flowed a river worthy of taking a picture, so I pulled in to retrieve my camera and Dan became the first victim of a stack. In an act of pure comedy, he found himself unable to remove his feet from his pedals, came to a stop and just keeled over.

As I took a picture I heard a shout of "Mate!" and turned just in time to see a teenager commit an act of Kamikaze like bravery, jumping out of a tree into the river about 40 feet below him. There seemed to be a pool between the rocks that was deep enough for some high jumping. It was a blistering day and I have to tell you that I was quite tempted to give it a go.

We then cycled the stunning shores of the amusingly named loch, Loch Lochy. So good

they named it twice.

Today's ride seemed to be never ending. By the time we arrived in Fort William we were ready to give it all in. But passing Spean Bridge where Bryn waited to wave us past and Ben Nevis, we knew that we were just a few miles away and were lifted just enough to complete the day. Especially as the last few miles were mostly downhill.

The restaurant and pub next door to our B & B was good enough to keep the kitchen open for us after being notified that we might be a tad late. The food being excellent with beer to match was a most welcome close to the day. We bumped into a family of Brummies in the bar and found that we didn't live too far away from each other. They accused us of being nutters for attempting the trip by cycle, but were a good bunch. And that opinion was reinforced the following day . . .



Dad and myself at the 200 mile mark, just as we approach Glencoe

Sunday the 16th of July

This morning, I felt a little bit rough. I seemed nervy, lacked energy and had the mother of all headaches. I seriously thought I'd over done it and wouldn't be able to complete today. But with Dan as my inspiration (if he was still going, and I'm sure he would keep going should a couple of his limbs fall off, then I could keep going) I set off with the team.

To my relief, half an hour later I felt fine.

We hit the 200 mile mark shortly after setting off, taking pictures of us in our location at this milestone. After patting ourselves on the back we set off again and found ourselves in Glencoe.

The weather was darned fine and cycling through this wondrous country side left us all feeling a little awestruck. It is for these moments that we live. A religious man might find their god in the vista's presented to us. I found something less spiritual, but no less an epiphany. I was humbled. Looking at this wondrous countryside, I understood my place.

It took us a longer than expected to cycle through this country as we stopped several times just to soak in the views.

Leaving Glencoe we hit some road works and only one lane was accessible, controlled by temporary traffic lights. Because the lane was too narrow for us to cycle past the stationary traffic safely we waited in the queue with the motorised traffic. We made our way to through the queue and found ourselves at the front, waiting for the lights to turn to green. It was now that a road worker stopped us from going and instructed us to wait until the lights turned red as we might hold up the following traffic.

What?



Cycling in Glencoe

Firstly, we *are* traffic, how can we hold up ourselves? We asked if he thought it was safe for us to cycle on a single track around a blind corner into on coming traffic and this was ignored. So he allowed us to travel and as predicted we cycled straight into oncoming traffic. They seemed to think that we had cheated, jumping a red light and let their feelings known by the use of their horn and some rather offensive gesticulation. I'm afraid that in retaliation to one of these idiots I smacked the side window of his car with the palm of my hand. He jumped out of his skin!

If he'd stopped his ranting about us "not obeying the law" he'd have found out we'd been forced into this dangerous situation and we were not there by choice at all.

So thanks idiot road worker. Not only did you put our lives in mortal danger, you also helped reinforce a few motorists preconceptions that cyclists have no respect for road law, which I assure you good reader, is not the case.

So on we go!

The cycling had been fairly easy going following the A82, taking us across beautiful undulating countryside. After lunch at the Bridge of Orchy Hotel in the Bridge of Orchy we set off on what turned out to be a 7 mile continuous climb. Not steep, but it did go on.

Towards the end of this we heard some commotion in a layby. As we got closer we recognised the Brummies we met in Fort William as they cheered us on taking video and photographs. I felt like Lance Armstrong. They must have passed us and decided to pass on their best wishes. As we had been climbing pretty much constantly for the day (though only seriously for the last 4 miles or so) it was just the moral boost we needed and that kind action spurred us on until we reached the plateau marked up at 1142 feet above sea level.

Looking around it looked downhill in any direction. We were wrong of course, but we only had a little climb to make before we hit a downhill stretch. A stretch that lasted for 13 miles! Get that, 13 miles for free! This set us up nicely for our digs in Luss.

Our B&B in Luss allowed 3 of us to pitch a tent in the Garden and 2 to sleep in the only available room (due to golf fans attending the Scottish Open taking up the other rooms). The



Pitching the tent in the Corries Front Garden

landlady Kirsteen, cooked us all a darned fine breakfast the next morning and even washed our cycling gear. A very accommodating family indeed.

We went off in search of an evening meal, however we were in Luss at the time of the Scottish Open and every table in every restaurant was booked by golf fans. After a search that seemed to last all evening we ended up in Balloch at a Chinese Restaurant where we enjoyed a rather tasty meal.

Monday the 17th of July.

We slept considerably well in the tent, in spite of the smell we had to put up with as a consequence of accidentally pitching the tent on a dog turd.

Myself, Matt and Dan joined Bryn and Dad in the house and sat for breakfast. The room looked over Loch Lomond and had perhaps the most stunning views available from any breakfast table in the world.

The midges were a real menace as we broke camp and Dad's face was bitten until he began to look like he'd developed the acne of a 13 year old boy who bathed in chip fat. With the tent packed away we got ready for our ride. While Matt was getting a drink of water it was noted by one of the older members of the team that the glass he was using had been used to soak a set of dentures overnight. Eeeugh!

Looking at the map we seemed to have quite a nasty dual carriageway to take us into our next town. However, it wasn't long before we found a cycle lane that took us around the beautiful Loch Lomond. We stopped at Balloch and popped into the Tourist Information Centre to see if the cycle route that followed the River Clyde was suitable for road bikes with narrow tyres, experience has taught us that very often cycle routes are only suitable for cycles built stronger than a Sherman Tank.

We were advised that we would be fine. Result! It seems we can get from Luss to Glasgow without traffic. And so we did. Though we would say that only 75% of the path is suitable for any bike less sturdy than a hard tail mountain bike, but we were on it and kept going. We had to cross a narrow mud field filled with cows, that didn't seem to be



Matt, Dan and Dad at 300 Miles near Glasgow

impressed by our presence, and near Duntocher we were diverted from the path through a wooded mud path that saw our wheels sink 6 inches or so. But, on the whole, it was preferable to a cycle with the traffic, and we met some other End to Enders who's names I wish I'd written down! We had a quick chat, compared routes and generally enjoyed a shared smugness about our common challenge.

As we approached Glasgow our vista's became a little more urban. Here I have seen what

must be a world first. A Sail Through Fish and Chip Takeaway. On the side of the river there was a Fish and Chip Shop with a window for boats to sail up to for fast service. I never took a picture. Dagnammit.

In Hamilton we found quite a nice Italian Restaurant and had lunch. Then we set off for Abington.

Our route was pleasant, though the roads are a bit rough. You may not notice in a car but on a cycle, the roads here wear you down until you feel every little imperfection in its surface jolt through the seat of your pants. Yup, a full suspension MTB might have certain advantages here. There was also a good deal of hill climbing and with the heat, water became a bit of an issue. But the last 5 miles or so saw an nice easy (mostly) downhill ride into Abington

In planning the trip we set our sights on Abington as a place to stay but ended up booking digs in Bigar. We decided to head for Abington and use the van to pick us up, drop us back the following morning. How disappointed we were to find a nice big hotel waiting for us in the village centre. We weren't too disappointed once we sat down for a Lamb Roast meal with a pint of 90 shillings in this fine establishment.

Tuesday the 18th of July

Our digs were a bit out of the way, but clean and pleasant. And we enjoyed another darned fine breakfast. We set off for Abington to pick up our trail. One of the staff at the hotel told us that Abington is the highest town in the UK. So we felt sure that today would be mostly downhill. Apart from few nasty climbs it was indeed mostly downhill as we headed for our next overnight stop at Carlisle.

Our route took us down minor roads running alongside the M74. The result was a fairly traffic free morning with motorised traffic favouring the motorway. It was also surprisingly rural and though we could hear the noise of the heavy traffic from time to time, we were still able to enjoy the views. This morning we saw yet another chapter in the story of Dan's bad luck. Adding to the problems of his exploding knee and stacking, now his cycling shoe is jammed in his pedal. We think he's lost a screw from his cleat and he's unable to unclip his right shoe from the pedal. Whenever we stop he has to take his shoe off leaving it attached to the bike, which annoyed Dan, but gave us another opportunity for some serious mickey taking.

We made our lunch stop at Lockerbie, at pub, or rather hotel called the Kings Arms. It's situated smack in the centre of the town and did great food. They also locked our bikes in a store room for safe keeping. I've never been to Lockerbie before. If you ignore the industrial units (and no town is without it's industrial quarter) to the north of the town it's well worth a visit, having a village kind of atmosphere.

Setting off again we set our course for Gretna Green. We didn't see too much of the village sort of skipping over the top. But we did pass the Blacksmiths which had some rather interesting artwork dotted about, and a tartan shop.



Edward and Gary cross the border

A mile or so down the road we hit a big milestone, we left Scotland. Scotland had looked after us so well (apart from the idiot construction worker who tried to get us killed) and I was sad that we'd left. Above all, I was going to miss the scenery and the friendly people all too willing to help. And if really pushed to find more I'm going to miss haggis and the beer, 90 shillings is a stunning pint. But I'm really not going to miss the midges. Scotland can keep it's midges.

We took a few pictures next to the "Welcome To England" sign and set off for the last few easy miles down country lanes. At least, that's what our map told us. What our map didn't tell us is that there was no entry from the nice country lanes we'd elected to cycle down to our hotel (Hotel? Quite a lofty description for a Travelodge). So after cycling up and down the lanes for half an hour or so we ended up on the A74, which is a motorway in all but name and legal status.

Never mind, it was just for half a mile or so and we were now set for a meal, a beer and an evenings rest, though not before cleaning and lubricating the bikes.

Wednesday the 19th of July

Day 6 of our trip was bloomin' hot! We haven't had a cool day but today seemed the hottest so far. And the cycling started out quite tough. And then it got tougher.

We planned the route with a stop in Settle because we thought the country side of Cumbria and Yorkshire would be more pleasant than cycling along the M6 through Lancaster. And without being too disrespectful to Lancaster (I'm sure it's a very nice place), it probably is a prettier route. What we didn't consider too much is just how much climbing we'd have to do. We didn't bank on this heat wave we were experiencing. We could feel our brains cooking inside our helmets and bandannas.

Our first stop was at Penrith where we found a cycle repair shop to free up Dan's shoe from his pedal. So a big thanks to Arragon's Cycle Centre. Penrith is a nice town if you're ever in the area. We didn't stay too long once Dan's bike was fixed, just long enough to stock up on water and energy foods.

We headed out from Penrith to our planned lunch stop at Shap. We found a pub called the Bull's Head and wasted no time. Though it was a blistering hot day we chose to eat



Dan, Matt and Dad following a tough climb in Cumbria

inside, we needed to keep out the sun as much as possible. Shap also lies across the C2C route and we bumped into plenty of walkers taking this challenge.

Leaving Shap we started a short but steep climb and then turned through good North English Countryside. We shared the otherwise empty roads with sheep. The problem with good North England countryside is that it's not too flat. And so began 20 or so miles of steep hills. It was either full on the brakes to keep us from crashing through road barriers or a 5 mph climb gasping for breath. There was just no in-between.

This seemed to go on and on. We passed chocolate box scenes with people swimming in the streams and rivers. It took all my will power not to jump off the bike and join them, it was just too darned hot. We took an extra break at a pub we found en-route and began to wonder if we'd ever finish that day. We were exhausted and appeared not to be covering any ground.

As it got later, around 20:00, we were just 7 or 8 miles or so from Settle (which seemed to be signposted as 8 miles away for 5 miles) and on a plateau. There wasn't a hill in sight. Settle must be downhill. And it was, of a sort. After 6 or 7 miles of level-ish roads, we found a short downhill followed by a massive climb. Still, we counted down the miles and we reckoned that Settle must be around the next corner. Following the grueling climb we'd started a nice downhill stretch picking up some speed. Bonus! But then disappointment. We saw a town. We shouted for joy, it must be Settle, there is nothing else marked on the map and no signs for any other town.

But the sign proudly displayed "Giggelsewick". What?, Is that some kind of sick joke? We're exhausted and the only village we can see is called Giggleswick. Looking at the map on our last stop, the very next village is marked as Settle. How much further can it be? Has somebody moved the town? We are demoralised and ready to give up. But those feelings don't last long, we were still cursing our luck when we passed another sign. This one does indeed display the town name of "Settle". Blimey! At last!

As we cycle through the centre of Settle we spy Bryn waiting for us outside the Golden Lion Hotel cheering us on, congratulating us on what he knew to be a very tough day for us. I was close to crying with relief that the days challenge was over. Looking back this was by far the toughest day and the closest I came to giving up. If Bryn would've asked if I wanted to spend the rest of the journey with him in the van, he might have received an answer in the affirmative.



Settle Station as seen from the Station B&B

We didn't even check in to the digs. Bryn had done that for us, we went straight to the Golden Lion and got our evening meal. Food and a couple of beers later and all was right with the world. We didn't feel so exhausted now

our arses weren't under the pressure from the saddle. Nope, we had a great big soft chair to sit on.

While Bryn and Dad shared a room, myself, Matt and Dan were sharing another. However, our room only had bedding for 2 people. I hadn't even been inside our digs (the Station Masters House at Settle Train Station, next door to Settle Cycles, it turns out) and I was stood outside the van to preparing the air bed for a nights sleep. Matt turned up and we had a friendly argument about who'd use the air bed. I offered but Matt was having none of it. He insisted on using it. I thought to myself, what a nice guy. At least I did until I got to the room, this wasn't a twin, it was a double!

No wonder Matt wanted the air-bed. He didn't want to share a bed with another one of us geezers. Fortunately, I had the presence of mind to use a sleeping bag so there was no contact between Dan and myself. None at all. Honest.

Thursday the 20th of July

Following a chat with our hosts at the Station House we decided on a small route alteration taking us away from the main roads. We set off in the rain, it was still hot but now it was wet too. We started well, going downhill or on level ground for most of the first few miles. After a ride through some pretty countryside in which the weather dried up and the sun came out, it seemed like no time at all and we had passed through Wigglesworth, then Clitheroe and we were in Blackburn.

I have only been to Blackburn once before, and then only to Ewood Park for a match with the Mighty Blues. So this is the first time I had really seen the town. The thing that struck me most is how impatient the motorists are there. I feel glad we got out of Blackburn alive. And The Beatles were wrong about the holes, I'm sure that there were more.

Blackburn marked the start of perhaps the most urban and busy roads we had on this trip. I resorted to using my instructor tabard which gave the impression I was instructing my team mates and hey presto, motorists seemed a little more patient and gave us a bit more room. Talk about sneaky >o)

We lunched at a pub once we passed Bolton.

We refuel and plod on. It started to get a little more rural though the roads were still busy. On one island I confused one poor motorist (I was in the wrong lane) so I apologised and set off in front of him. Half way around the island I was held by a set of lights and a motorcyclist joined me at the front of the queue. I told him that I could take him if I pedaled fast and he agreed as he reckoned his bike had passed it's prime. I nearly had him too but he got me on the corner. At this point the motorist I'd chatted with also over took me while shaking a fist out of his window and screaming that he knew he'd take me in the end. Had I known we were racing I'd have pedaled harder. It was nice to enjoy a friendly exchange with fellow road users rather than the hostility that us cyclists get for having the nerve to be on the road.

Sadly, from a shared road point of view, things took a turn for the worse. As we cycled down the busy road we approached a corner obscured by trees and bushes. We were on a narrow lane with a solid white line so as the corner got near I moved into the primary riding position to discourage the following traffic from overtaking. The car behind revved his engine in disgust, just as a truck appeared from around the corner flying towards us. Had I give him the room to get past us he'd be dead now. We got around the corner and I moved to the left to let the traffic past. As he got along side us the impatient drivers window wound down and I expected a "Phew, lucky there huh?" kind of comment. What I got was abuse. I couldn't help laughing at him. Idiot. Looking back, I wish I'd let him hurry to his death now.

We arrived at Cuddington and dropped into the White Barn for a well earned pint. From here we went back to Knutsford to the most local digs we could find, the Travelodge on the M6! Needless to say, we got a lift in the van.

Through my Sister-in-law we were offered an invitation to play 10 pin bowling at Lakeside Leisure in Crewe. So no early night tonight. We got a meal and headed for the bowling alley. We were given 2 games of bowling and a couple of round of beers! Cheers guys! At first, Dad didn't fancy going. He wanted an early night because we had to be up early to "Get Cracking". A beer and a laugh later he had changed his mind and we had to prize the bowling shoes off his feet.

Oh, and a note of some importance, I am bowling king. I won. They are but gnats to be bowled down by my nimble, bowling ball skill. I fart in their general direction, their mothers are hamsters and their fathers smelled of elderberries. Or something like that (That's it. I promise there will be no more Python quotes).

Friday the 21st of July

The van dropped us off at our pick up point from last night, the White Barn at Cuddington. Matt discovered that he'd lost his Rack Pack and with it, his wet weather gear, the lenses for his cycling glasses and energy bars. Actually, quite an expensive loss.

Something to note here though, Matt seemed to be removing bits from his bike as we went, his mudguards and now his bag. The weight reduction was noted and I think it's getting too tough for the fella. I half expected to see him pass us on the bus.

Like yesterday the cycling was easy going but on fairly busy roads. It was certainly busier on the morning and as we cycled through the day, it got quieter and more rural. We headed for Whitchurch and were making good time. It was still mid morning when we arrived and made a quick stop for refreshments and to get out the sun. Dan needed number twos and after finding the public toilet, found it devoid of toilet paper. Being a resourceful kind of chap he popped into a discount store to buy a roll of toilet paper. He was told by the assistant that he'd have to buy a minimum of 24 rolls. The girl serving him noticed his legs were crossed and asked if it was for now, he replied it was so she offered him a complimentary roll of paper. We decided the people of Whitchurch are nice.

We took this time for a map check. We noticed that we were just 3 miles from the Welsh border and discussed whether we should detour across it so that we could say we'd cycled all 3 mainland countries. In the end, Dad said we had to "Get Cracking" (Good reader, is it annoying you yet as much as it annoyed us during the ride? Nope? It will) so we pressed on for Shrewsbury and our final stop of Ludlow having only cycled 2 of the 3 countries.

Shrewsbury was an interesting place to cycle through. And for anyone who knows and is interested, we cycled over the English Bridge. On the other side of Shrewsbury town centre we stopped for lunch and then headed for Ludlow.

We bumped into a couple more End to Enders and swapped routes and stories. We pulled in to have our 600 mile marker photo and the other End to Enders pressed on. They had more miles than us to cover over the course of that day.

So we took the pictures and pressed on to Ludlow. Approaching the digs that were to the south of Ludlow, I think we became a little less diligent and the next chapter of Dan's bad luck story was written. Dan turned back to say something to Matt and steered in towards the kerb, clipping it slightly. To keep his balance he put his foot down on a raised grass verge and



The Big Six Oh Oh (point one)

sprained his ankle. Did you know that ankles can swell up until they resemble a football? We discouraged him from taking his cycling shoe off for fear that he wouldn't be able to get it back on and cycled the last few miles to our digs in Ludlow. We hoped that after a nights kip, his ankle would be looking better in the morning.

About a mile before the digs we saw a strange man standing on the side of the road wearing a T-Shirt which said "Sheila's Wheelers". It was Tom, Dan's Dad. Dan was expecting to see his Dad with the T-shirts but the rest of us were clueless. Seeing Mum's name at this point was quite emotional and Dad was especially moved. We had a quick chat with Tom and then pressed on to our Digs

At our Travelodge we had a welcoming party. Waiting for us was Bryn (old faithful, not sure how we'd 'ave got on without his support), Tom, Jan (Dad's sister) and her husband Mick. We were told that more friends and family were on the way. Tom dished out a couple of Sheila's Wheelers t-shirts to all that turned up. The shirts can be seen in some of the photographs.

We showered and changed and all put on our new team t-shirts ready for the pub.

At the pub we enjoyed a pint and a meal that was paid for by Mick and Jan. When we protested saying that they shouldn't be buying our meal he asked us to donate the

money to our charities. We felt that was very generous indeed and his instructions were followed.

During the evening a few more friends turned up. My cousin Sharon and her husband Andy arrived followed by Kieth (my Dads friend) and his daughter, Karen. We talked about our adventure so far, caught up with what was going on outside our adventure and generally had a good time.

It was quite sad when the evening was over.

Saturday the 22nd of July

We popped across to the Little Chef for Breakfast. It wasn't long before Dad was telling us that we needed to "get cracking"

We hadn't got a big day today and as you can tell from our stats, we only spent just over 3 and a half hours in the saddle.

We enjoyed a good pace and we also clocked up our fastest daily average speed. Our day started on the A49, not the most cycle friendly routes we have taken. We planned to head out towards Leominster and then out towards Gloucester, breaking for lunch at Newent. We were relieved to see that Dan's Knee and Ankle seemed to be holding up.

We arrived at Newent only to find it closed. All of it. We looked but every eatery seemed to be closed. Dad reckoned we should get cracking, and so we did.

We approached Gloucester desperately looking for somewhere to eat. Our quiet road was heading for a busy looking dual carriageway (according to the map) the A40, but fortunately I spotted a cycle route into the town centre. However, Matt had decided on his pace and wasn't slowing for anything, so he shot passed the cycle lane and on to what was indeed a very busy dual carriageway. It had little in the way of protection and the traffic was very heavy. A couple of motorists found it difficult not to run us down, cutting by us very finely indeed. The thought of slowing down didn't seem to cross their mind.

The good news is that we found a pub on this road and they served us to a fine Ploughman's Lunch.

After lunch, we got back onto the dual carriageway but we soon picked up a cycle lane in to Gloucester Town Centre.

It seems Gloucester had been expecting us and they'd closed the centre for a parade. For a short time we joined the carnival as we pushed our bikes (Police orders, they let us through but asked us to dismount) for a quarter of a mile through the centre.

Jumping back on our bikes we headed down the A38 towards Stroud. The A38 isn't much fun to cycle down and it has the most useless cycle lanes in the country. They appear just

before traffic islands, and then throw you back into the flow of traffic once you've passed it, but only after putting us across each exit of the island.

We arrived in Stroud at the Travelodge just as it started to rain, not long after 3pm. This was our earliest finish. We got showered and changed, then headed for a pub recommended by a member of staff at the hotel called the Old Forge Inn. It turned out to be a good recommendation, food and beer being rather good.

Sunday the 23rd of July

We picked up where we left off last night. Though the evening and night was dry, it had started raining again on the morning.

We cared not. It was hardly a down pour, still quite warm and within an hour we'd pulled in to remove our wet weather gear (well, most of us did, Matt's wet weather gear was still in his bag back in Cheshire somewhere).

We followed the A38 for the most part. Some of it easier for the cycle than other stretches. Bristol turned out to be demoralising. Bristol is surprisingly hilly, and we managed to find the steepest of them on our route. Saying we had a route suggests a plan at this point. Evidently not the case and we decided to follow the road signs to Taunton. If anybody that isn't local to Bristol decides to cycle through it and is reading this I'd like to offer the following advice. Under no circumstances follow the roads signs. Buy a map. We might have saved 5 miles cycling if we'd gone directly through the town centre. As it was, we cycled around and then zig zagged across the town. One signpost sent us down a dual carriageway, only to direct us on a full U-turn about a third of a mile down the road.

Looking at the map later we could see a direct route through the town for cyclists. As it went, it felt like we'd been locked into some Prisoner-esque City that was never going to let us go

Another good tip for cyclists going through Bristol on the A38 is to ignore cycle lanes. The A38's dodgy cycle lanes were as bad as the A38 yesterday. They take you across more junctions and end very abruptly, dumping you on a fast moving dual carriageway. You'd be better to take the lane early putting you in sight of following motorists, rather than hidden from view until you're dumped in their path. Neither the motorist or cyclist wants that kind of surprise.

Bristol was home to at least one idiot. We met him at a set of lights. He gave us a load of verbal abuse as he passed us and I'm afraid I responded in kind, so he slowed down. I caught him up and had the usual conversation where I was told that cyclists shouldn't be on the road etc. He objected to the amount of road I took on the junction. I tried to tell him that I was cycling to NCTS for safety, but he ignored this and continued with his rant. We wouldn't have slowed him on his journey at all if he wasn't so keen to argue with us regarding his opinion that we should pay road tax.

Of course, I responded that I did.¹

Oh well, on we go. Following the A38 out towards Taunton from Bristol we found a rather inviting pub. It turned out to be an alright place to have lunch. We sat outside under a large umbrella, the heat being too much to sit outside of any shade. Lunch and a couple of soft drinks later, we set off for the second leg of day 10.

The A38 here was as grim a route to cycle as the previous stretch and we pulled in near the airport to give ourselves a break from the traffic. Things changed once we passed over the top of the M5 and for the a good few miles we rode pretty much along the motorway which meant we were cycling traffic free roads, for the most part.

We passed Brent Knoll which is a landmark I've often driven by and for me is the gateway to Somerset, a place I've spent many happy summers exploring. I like this part of the world and looked forward to cycling through it.

On a (possibly) related note, I read the children's book *The Roundhill* by Dick King-Smith (quite a good read even as an adult) so that I could discuss the book with my niece who was reading it for school. I believe that Brent Knoll is the Roundhill in question. Who knows eh?²

From Brent Knoll we cycled on through Burnham On Sea, Bridgewater and out towards Taunton. Though this is some of the most level terrain we have cycled over, the heat was again ferocious and we made an extra stop to pick up some shade and water.



To prevent offending other patrons of the Hankridge Arms, we were asked to hide our faces

We arrived at Taunton and (as so often we had done during the ride) called ahead to Bryn for directions to the Hotel. We still got lost a little. Not lost as such, but sort of expected the hotel to appear sooner than it did.

We cleaned and lubed the bikes, got showered and headed for the pub for well earned food and drink. The drink in question for me turned out to be a stunner of a pint. I'm afraid it may have even knocked McKewens 90 Shillings off it's number one spot in the "Drink Of the Ride" charts. Stinger

by Badger Breweries is an organic pint that uses nettles for flavouring. Sounds awful, tastes divine. I understand that the recipe was formulated by Hugh Fernley Whittingshaw and is a must try for all ale fans.

¹ Or would if it existed. The roads are funded out of the treasury and not through the VED (often mistakenly referred to as road tax). In other words, my income tax, the VAT I pay on goods I purchase and so on all contribute towards the upkeep of our roads. And I also pay VED for my car. So to use idiot mans logic, as I cause a lot less damage to the roads when I cycle I should get a rebate for every journey I make without my car. Yes VED also goes to the treasury. But then, nobody demands that the tax gained from alcohol is used to fund better beer (though I would support that), so why this narrow thinking about VED and road funding?

² Dick King Smith, obviously

The bar manager at the Hankridge Arms, a girl called Shelley asked about our Sheila's Wheelers T-Shirts and upon finding out our ride was for charity, bought us a round of drinks. We donated the money for the drinks to our charities on behalf of her and her staff, one of whom cycled E2E last year.

Monday the 24th of July

On our way to the adjacent Supermarket customer canteen for breakfast, we were greeted by a hot air balloon, which had a great bonus of an advertisement for underwear featuring a rather large picture of a half naked young lady across it's side. It was a sort of free, mobile pornography. And it was good.

The helpful receptionist at our hotel informed us of a cycle track that would take us out to Taunton Town Centre on an NCN, traffic free route. A welcome find after yesterdays nightmare trip of the A38 through Bristol. The weather didn't let us down and the sun was out. All was right with the world.

We popped up in the middle of Taunton, cycled passed the Castle Hotel and out towards Perry's Cider Farm. I've bought many a croc of Cider from there but sadly hadn't got the luggage space for any at the time. We found a lay-by with a refreshment van parked up in it and thought we'd take the opportunity for a break with a proper cup of tea on hand. It was a tad early but what the heck.

As we sat there with our cup of tea, the 3 end to enders who we passed between Luss and Glasgow took a turn at passing us. We waved but as we were sort of hidden, they never spotted us. Not to worry, not long after restarting our journey we bumped into them as they took a break of their own. It was good to see they were enjoying their trip. We swapped our stories and wished them well, they needed all the luck they could get as they had about 115 miles still to cover for that day. I didn't envy them at all as we all knew the terrain was going to get quite hilly as we moved further south.

At Cullompton we got off the beaten track a bit and followed NCN routes through narrow country lanes and stunning scenery. The route seemed to meander a little so we checked the map and followed its straightest route. And that appeared to be quite a mistake. We set back our progress somewhat by following some vicious climbs towards Butterliegh. After getting on level terrain we decided that it would be better to head for the more major roads which had flatter routes to make up some time.



Matt, Dad and Dan in Devon

While enjoying the views Dad made Matt a victim of the biggest stack of the trip as he tried to cycle through him. The accident happened behind me so I didn't see it. I did hear it mind. A screech of brakes, a clatter of metal on metal, a thud of flesh on flesh.

And then an apology from Matt as he was helped up from the floor by Dad and Dan. It seemed a rather generous apology after being run over. The good news is nobody was hurt and the bikes were undamaged.

Undeterred we carried on heading for a major road until Matt spotted a very inviting shortcut. We all agreed we'd been stupid not to spot it before. And after our progress was halted further by scary climbs in uncomfortable heat we all agreed that the real stupidity was not to stick to our plan of heading for the flatter major roads. The scenery was good but our average speed had dipped to around just 5 mph through this "shortcut".

We stopped in the village of Crediton at the first pub we came to, which happened to be called The Crediton Inn. It was a traditional old pub and didn't really do food beyond sandwiches. So that's what we had for lunch, supplemented with a couple of packets of high energy peanuts. We managed to find a bit of shade outside on a picnic table and sat there, keeping an eye on the bikes. It seemed minutes before Dad vocalised his thoughts in the now immortal phrase of "We need to get cracking"

We set off and hit some severe hills through the village heading for the country lanes and make fairly steady progress, though very tiring. Now brace yourself good reader, the most unexpected thing happens. It's hard to believe given his good luck so far on this ride, but Dan runs into a problem. As we climb up a hill quite steadily I hear an almighty crack followed by an expletive from Dan. He informs us that his seat has "gone". Further examination shows that his seat post has split. Carbon Fibre isn't as strong as they make out. It looks to me as though Dan's day of cycling is done but Dad came up with the genius idea of dropping the seat post lower, well beyond the break. Dan gives it a quick test and seems happy to carry on. I warn him to be careful, especially on climbs as dropping the saddle will put an extra strain on his already dodgy knee.

We enjoyed our cycle through the countryside (or rather all but Dan did, the lower position of his saddle did indeed give his knee some considerable pain). We headed up some severe and some steady climbs until we hit Okehampton, where we were relieved find a nice hill we could coast down. Then through some genius anti-logic map reading, we managed to cycle 4 miles the wrong way. We turned around and cycled 4 miles back into Okehampton and back to the junction we should have turned right at, not left. We were just a few miles from our digs yet it seemed like they might be as far back as John O'Groats. We clock our 800th mile just past this junction.

We took a map check at the A30, which we didn't want to get on but was inevitable that we'd have to. There was a steep climb up a very busy dual carriageway and we really didn't relish it. Tempers were raised as we discussed whether we could find another route or if indeed we were actually on the right track at all. After a little discussion and re-examining of the surrounding features in relationship to our map and we set off up the A30 to our digs.

Dan decided to grab a sandwich at the local petrol station and then get an early night while the rest of us went out for a beer and food at Betty Cottles Inn. A great pub that

has camping facilities. If we'd known we'd have stayed here!

Tuesday 25th of July

We got breakfast at a Little Chef next to our digs and got ready for the off. I had been having trouble changing up gears yesterday and a small investigation this morning revealed a sticky gear cable. So it was changed and I had a smooth running bike again.

Using the Yellow Pages we tracked down a cycle shop in Okehampton and as we set off, Bryn headed back into the town to purchase a nice new seat post for Dan. We followed the old A30 which was thankfully, almost free of traffic. We headed for Lewdon and then made good time to Lifton where we pulled in for refreshments and waited for Bryn to arrive with the new seat post. We had a quick map check and asked a couple of the locals what our best route might be. Experience had taught us to run our route passed locals. It also taught us that locals don't mind sending us up a sheer rock face if they believe it to be the shortest route. Our friendly locals asked what we were up to, enjoyed a quick chat about nothing in the way that only the British seem able to do. We were advised to head up St Stevens Hill once we were in Launceston. The words "up" and "hill" made us wince but we took their advice on board and thanked them for it.

Bryn arrived with the seat post and Dan had his bike back in working order.

It seemed like just a few miles (probably because it was just a few miles) and we passed a sign which read "Welcome To Cornwall". We cheered as we passed it and felt an enormous amount of pride, pride which got us up the first hill into Launceston. Matt and Dan got ahead of myself and Dad and of course, went the wrong way. So Dad and I enjoyed a chat with a Launcestonian (did I just make that up?) who had commented on the BCFC top I was wearing. Dad and I laughed our lycra shorts off when we found out how much of the hill that Matt and Dan had climbed when they didn't need to.

We cycled through the lovely town of Launceston, down some steep narrow streets of the town and found a sign for St Stevens. St Stevens Hill wasn't the biggest hill we'd climbed, but my god it was big enough and steep enough. We stopped at the top to allow some air into our lungs and on Dad's notification that it might be time to get cracking, we set off for Bodmin. I was looking forward to meeting the beast, but the others thought that was no way to speak of Bryn who'd helped us so much (sorry, cheap gag but couldn't resist it).

Leaving the quiet country lanes we headed down the A395. Just before the junction of the A39 we stopped to call ahead to Bryn to see if he was near enough to stop for lunch with us. We asked of his whereabouts and he replied that he was on the junction of the A395 and A39. Hmmm. As we turned the corner we could see him in a layby. Other people who'd seen us and him on the phone and the following exchange as we passed him were smiling at us after obviously putting two and two together. We left Bryn to finish reading the chapter in his book and "got cracking".

We got into Camelford ahead of Bryn and found the Masons Arms. There is very little parking space in Camelford but the landlady at the pub allowed Bryn to park the Van in

the archway/driveway that I assume was the old coach house entrance. We ate a traditional pub lunch and discussed our trip with the staff of the pub. They were kind enough to send us a free round of Toasted Garlic Bread as they thought we could do with the energy. If you're ever in Camelford, pop in and enjoy the hospitality.

The afternoon was uneventful, we traveled down through Camelford and turned right at St Columb Major towards Newquay. Our campsite was situated about 3 or 4 miles outside the seaside town. The site turned out to be a good find and provided you don't mind watching the helicopters from a nearby air base, it's well worth stopping here.

The camping gear was unloaded from the Van then Dad and Bryn set off for their B&B. It appears that they're far too good to rough it in a tent. Dan, Matt and I pitched the tent and headed for the swimming pool. Joy of joys! We cooled down in the pool. It seemed like such a luxury.



Dad Cycling into Camelford

There didn't seem too many good places to eat in Newquay, which surprised us and we ended up in a pub called Mavericks. The food was OK, not bad, but not the best either. The entertainment came in the form of a singer/musician called Ian Lockyear. He turned out to be quite amusing having a good rapport with the kids and obfuscating his more adult jokes enough to go over their heads but still understandable by the adults.

Off to bed.³

Wednesday the 26th of July.

We got up, dressed and started breaking camp. Dan disappeared while the hard work was being done but was soon forgiven when he turned up with a bacon and egg sandwich from the camp café. Genius bit of resourcing there Dan!

We headed through Newquay and down some narrow lanes towards Redruth. We were lucky to get out of Newquay alive as the coach drivers seemed very impatient. One accident was only avoided because the paint shop had skimped on paint during the spraying of the coach. Had there been an extra layer of paint on that coach and we'd be dead now. If I'd caught up with that driver he'd be picking up his teeth with broken fingers (to paraphrase Alan Partridge).

The profile of the landscape was as yesterday, non stop hilly. They were never particularly big, but they were always steep and as soon as you descended one, you were

³ I woke up in the night to hear the tinkle of somebody from our tent urinating in a nearby bush. Apparently, the toilet block just 150 yards away was a yard too far for one of the team members. I think it would be unfair to name names and it's suffice to say that it obviously wasn't me. Or Matt.

climbing the next.

Despite this we made good time, no soon had we passed Cambourne and we were in Hayle were we felt was a good place to stop and get lunch. We decided that now we were in Cornwall, we should have a Cornish Pasty. At a garage we stopped to buy water and asked where the best place was to get a Pasty, we were told to go nowhere but Philps'. A mile or so down the road we found and stopped at Philps' for our Cornish Pasty. And what a pasty it was! I had the Medium sized pasty. I couldn't eat it all. It was handed over the counter and as took the full weight in my hand I suffered several hernias. I can't recommend these pasties enough, generous sizes and very tasty. But have the small, its big enough. I think the large must be intended to feed an entire family.

About now we started receiving calls from family members waiting for us at Land's End who asked "Are you nearly here yet?". We were around 20 miles away and got one of these calls every 5 minutes.

Just outside Hayle we stopped to take our photo in front of a sign showing the distance to Land's End. We were nearly there and somehow didn't want it to end. We had mixed feelings of excitement, pride and sadness that it would soon be over. We started to soak up the event, reminisce over the last two weeks and just enjoy the last few miles. We joked about the achievement ("it wasn't *that* far") and for the first time, we all felt that we would complete the ride. It's hard to explain the emotion, the overall feeling at this time was "we'd done it!"

I was a bit worried that we'd get too cocky, lose concentration and end up stacking in a large pile in the road, arriving at Land's End in an ambulance. Fortunately, it didn't happen.

But things did start to get a bit strange now. Cars passing us from the opposite direction slowed and cheered. People were hanging out of car windows and appeared to be cheering us on. We thought maybe it was the Sheila's Wheelers t-shirts giving the game away, but no, it took us a fraction of a second to realise that Bryn and the rest of the welcome party had been talking to people while they waited for us at Land's End.

We were called by Bryn and asked to stop about a mile from final destination and call him so he could get the welcome party together. As we set off following our call we cycled 4 abreast and didn't care if we held up traffic. We'd got less than a mile to go and we were going to savour it. As it goes, we didn't hold up any traffic. We turned into the approach road to Land's End and Dan was the first to spot "a sea of Sheila's Wheelers T-shirts". It was quite overwhelming.



Approaching the finish line



I finally made it.

We were ushered passed the gate to the Land's End Centre by the staff with words of congratulation and we could hear the crowd. Bryn didn't just get the welcome party together he had an announcement made over the tannoy. Not only did our welcome party of about 30 or so people turn out, but a good few of the visitors at the centre came out to see what was going on. We were still cycling 4 abreast but were prevented from crossing the line at the same time by an inconveniently parked coach and I allowed Dad to cycle a head so that he

didn't ride into the back of it. The noise of the crowd grew louder as we approached within a few feet of the finish line, and then with the sound of hands clapping, the roar of cheering in our ears, we crossed the line. We'd done it!

It was odd. People we'd never met congratulated us on our achievement. They took our picture and filmed us with camcorders. They wanted to know why and how we'd done it. Such was the friendliness of the people we met there, quite suddenly, it seemed that Team Sheila's Wheelers had grown by 150 new members.

We got the obligatory photo taken at the Land' End Post and we signed the End to End book at the headquarters of the End to End Club. We relaxed, caught up with family, soaked up the sun, soaked up the atmosphere.

Once the emotion had settled, we packed the van and set off for a holiday park that we'd be spending the next few days in. I picked up the road atlas that Bryn used in the van and looked at the map of the UK. It seemed an impossible feat that we'd performed. We each sat back in reflection and soon the congratulatory banter became more infrequent until we sat in silence, there was nothing more to be said.

We finally arrived at our caravan and there was one more surprise. The welcome party had put out banners and put the fizzy stuff on ice. We toasted the success of the trip. And toasted the wonderful woman whose name we'd cycled under, my Mum Sheila.



Ride Statistics

Day by Day

Friday the 14th of July : John O'Groats to Tain

Distance Today: 87 Miles
Total Distance: 87 Miles
Average Speed: 13.6 MPH
Maximum Speed: 46.9 MPH
Time in Saddle: 6 hours 10 Minutes

Saturday the 15th of July : Tain To Fort William

Distance Today: 97.56 Miles
Total Distance: 184.8 Miles
Average Speed: 12.7 MPH
Maximum Speed: 38.6 MPH
Time in Saddle: 7 hours 36 Minutes

Sunday the 16th of July : Fort William to Luss

Distance Today: 73.49 Miles
Total Distance: 258.3 Miles
Average Speed: 13.3 MPH
Maximum Speed: 35.1 MPH
Time in Saddle: 5 hours 29 Minutes

Monday the 17th of July : Luss to Abington

Distance Today: 73.89 Miles
Total Distance: 332.2 Miles
Average Speed: 11.8 MPH
Maximum Speed: 30.3 MPH
Time in Saddle: 6 hours 15 Minutes

Tuesday the 18th of July : Abington to Carlisle

Distance Today: 59.33 Miles
Total Distance: 391.5 Miles
Average Speed: 13.1 MPH
Maximum Speed: 28.1 MPH
Time in Saddle: 4 hours 31 Minutes

Wednesday the 19th of July : Carlisle to Settle

Distance Today: 78 Miles
Total Distance: 470.6 Miles

Average Speed: 11.3 MPH
Maximum Speed: 40.2 MPH
Time in Saddle: 6 hours 56 Minutes

Thursday the 20th of July 2006 : Settle to Cuddington

Distance Today: 71.15 Miles
Total Distance: 541.8 Miles
Average Speed: 13.7 MPH
Maximum Speed: 31.8 MPH
Time in Saddle: 5 hours 10 Minutes

Friday the 21st of July : Cuddington to Ludlow

Distance Today: 75.5 Miles
Total Distance: 617.5 Miles
Average Speed: 13.2 MPH
Maximum Speed: 36.4 MPH
Time in Saddle: 5 hours 41 Minutes

Saturday the 22nd of July : Ludlow to Stroud

Distance Today: 52.01 Miles
Total Distance: 669 Miles
Average Speed: 14.0 MPH
Maximum Speed: 34.3 MPH
Time in Saddle: 3 hours 41 Minutes

Sunday the 23rd of July : Stroud to Taunton

Distance Today: 71.26 Miles
Total Distance: 740.3 Miles
Average Speed: 13.4 MPH
Maximum Speed: 36.8 MPH
Time in Saddle: 5 hours 17 Minutes

Monday the 24th of July : Taunton to Okehampton

Distance Today: 64.79 Miles
Total Distance: 804.1 Miles
Average Speed: 11.4 MPH
Maximum Speed: 36.9 MPH
Time in Saddle: 5 hours 38 Minutes

Tuesday the 25th of July : Okehampton to Newquay

Distance Today: 54.93 Miles
Total Distance: 859.7 Miles
Average Speed: 13.3 MPH
Maximum Speed: 41.7 MPH

Time in Saddle: 4 hours 05 Minutes

Wednesday the 26th of July : Newquay to Land's End

Distance Today: 48.4 Miles

Total Distance: 907.3 Miles

Average Speed: 12.6 MPH

Maximum Speed: 37.2 MPH

Time in Saddle: 3 hours 50 Minutes

Overall

Total Distance: 907.3 Miles

Average Speed: 12.88 MPH

Maximum Speed: 46.9 MPH

Time in Saddle: 70 hours 19 Minutes

Sheila's Wheelers Idiot Quotes Page

Perhaps it was the exhaustion, perhaps we're just not very bright. Whatever the reason, we found plenty of opportunities to ridicule each other because of the things we said.

Here for your pleasure and our humiliation is a list of some the things that were articulated, where a basic level of common sense should have prevented them from ever making the journey from mind to vocal chords.

"Is that cow blue?" Ok, that one was me. But to be fair, through my sunglasses a certain breed of gray cow looked blue.

"That's a funny place name, Twenty's Plenty". Matt made this comment after passing a sign outside a school which warned drivers about their speed. Yes Matt, and there were other curiously named places such as the modern town of "Diversion", the sea side holiday town of "Loose Chippings" and the historic market town of "Traffic Lights Ahead".

"I'd like to come back as a sparrow" was a random comment thrown into a conversation by Edward. Hmmm.

"Let's Get Cracking!" This became the battle cry of Sheila's Wheelers. Edward said this. Often. Very, very often.

"Are we nearly there yet". Predictably asked by me as we set off from my house, 30 seconds into our 13 hour drive up to John O'Groats.

"I wish I was wearing a nappy" The rest of the guys were hoping that Edward wasn't trying to subtly let us know about an onset of incontinence.

"I don't have any problems with my bike or limbs" is a quote that we never heard from Dan.

"It would be nice to wear a dress" Huh? On a bike? Edward was taking about attire that might be cool in the height of the summer. At least, that was his claim after articulating this thought.

Further Details and Information

Below are the resources and services we used to help us complete the challenge.

Guides

There is plenty of information available if you decide to take the challenge of cycling End to End. Below are some of the guides we used, recommendations that were suggested to us, or resources I have found since completing our challenge that I wish I'd found before.

Websites

Sheila's Wheelers: <http://www.hotshot-it.co.uk/sw/>

The guide you're reading! It was initially used to promote us and help raise funds for our charities.

Bike Reader: <http://www.bikereader.com/e2e.html>

A list of other E2E sites.

The Ultimate E2E Lists: <http://www.users.waitrose.com/~ianclare/links.htm>

This is a massive list of online journals. I used this to track down information for our route planning. There are some duds listed, however most are useful.

Rob and Joe's E2E: <http://www.beewee.co.uk/JOGLE2005index.htm>

If you only look at one website to research your own E2E, make it this one. We used this as a starting point in planning our route. Our route is somewhat different but this guide gave us a launch point in our planning.

The Cycle Touring Club: <http://www.ctc.org.uk/>

Look here for cycle touring advice. And join the CTC while you're at it. You will get E2E route information free to your letterbox

Micks LE-JOG-LE: <http://lejogandback.blogspot.com/>

Mick is the guy we met near John O'Groats who was doing an E2E twice in the same trip. He created a blog of his journey. Worth a read. And if you don't believe that we met him, he corroborates our story in his blog. So there.

The Cycle Touring Clubs Online Forum: <http://forum.ctc.org.uk/>

Log in here and talk to many, many End to Enders for all the practical advice you need. The best place to get that nagging question answered.

Books

Cycling Britain

Written by Ian Connellan and published by Lonely Planet Publications
ISBN-10: 1864500379 : ISBN-13: 978-1864500370

We bought this but didn't really use it for route planning or as a guide. Make of that what you will. It's not a bad book as such, but it didn't fit our purpose. The author is from New Zealand and this guide is intended to be read by visitors to Britain. There are plenty of route guides and places of interest to visit. More importantly there is a suggested E2E route.

Bike Britain: Cycling from Land's End to John O'Groats

Written by Paul Salter and published by Epic New Zealand Ltd
ISBN-10: 0958225613 : ISBN-13: 978-0958225618

We didn't even buy this but it has been recommended by many other E2E'ers. From what I understand, this E2E route is very similar to ours.

Accommodation Recommendations

A word on routes and accommodation

Below is a list of the Accommodation that we used and our rating. If looking for suggestions for your own E2E, bear in mind that the accommodation at Knutsford was on the M6 and you ain't going to be able to cycle there. Apart from this, most of these are fine for unsupported rides and the accommodation listed are all cycle friendly.

In addition to the above, the accommodation in Bigar and Knutsford do not quite fall on our route. If you plan to follow our route unsupported either amend the route or look for alternative accommodation at these 2 sites. For Bigar this is no problem as there is plenty of alternative accommodation at Abington. However, our Cuddington stop turned up no local accommodation in our pre-ride planning and so we opted for a stop at Knutsford. It may be worth looking at an alternative stop on this part of the route.

It might be noted that we booked several nights at Travelodges. Though convenient this was a mistake. Look for B&B's. We met such nice people and enjoyed clean rooms, good food and fantastic hospitality (bar one unfortunate booking) that we highly recommend spending some time with these people.

Oh, and it is strongly recommended that you book accommodation early. Then you won't have to book Travelodges at all.

Our Accommodation List

Thursday 13th July

Name: Waterside House
Address: Waterside House, 3 Janet Street , Thurso
Telephone: 01847 894751
SW Rating: Good, clean and cheap accommodation. Rita donated to our charities.

Friday 14th July

Name: Heatherdale
Address: 2 Well St, Tain, Rossshire
Telephone: 01862 894340
Contact: Alice Fraser
SW Rating: Excellent. Good breakfast. Bike friendly. Great Hosts. Stay here if you're ever in the area.

Saturday 15th July

Name: Glendevin
Address: Righ Crescent, Inchree, Onich, Fort William, Inverness-shire, PH336SG
Telephone: 01855821330
Contact: archiegibb@glendevin.com
SW Rating: Excellent. Good clean accommodation. Archie cooked a fine breakfast.

Sunday 16th July

Name: The Corries bed and breakfast
Address: Inverbeg, Luss, Loch Lomond, G83 8PD
Telephone: 01436 860275
Contact: Kirsteen
SW Rating: Top rated accommodation. Our hosts really put themselves out for us. Good accommodation, great breakfast and the best view from any breakfast table anywhere in the world. The Corries wins the Sheila's Wheelers award for best accommodation.

Monday 17th July

Name: Cuil Darach
Address: 7 Langvout Gate, Biggar, Lanarkshire, ML21 6UF
Telephone: 01899 221259
Contact: Joan Keys
SW Rating: Excellent. Good food. Good accommodation. A bit far from the nearest pub but is set in glorious countryside.

Tuesday 18th July

Name: Carlisle Todhills Travelodge

Address: A74 Southbound, Carlisle, CA6 4HA
Telephone: 0870 191 1627
SW Rating: It's a travelodge. It did the job and for the number in our party, is quite cheap. The staff helped store cycles. It did mean a trip to Little Chef for breakfast which added cost.

Wednesday 19th July

Name: Station Masters House
Address: Station Masters House, Station Road , Settle
Telephone: 01729 822533
SW Rating: Excellent. Good food, friendly hosts. Good clean accommodation. There are no showers on-site and you will need to use the bath. Apart from this, great accommodation.

Thursday 20th July

Name: Premier Travel Inn
Address: 520 Chester Road, Sandiway, Northwich , Cheshire, CW8 2DN
Telephone: 0870 990 6494
SW Rating: It's a Travel Inn. It did the job and for the number in our party, is quite cheap. The staff helped store cycles. The breakfast at the service stations was far from cheap.

Friday 21st July

Name: Travelodge Ludlow Wooferton Hotel
Address: A49 Wooferton, Ludlow, SY8 4AL
Telephone: 0870 191 1586
SW Rating: It's a travelodge. It did the job and for the number in our party, is quite cheap. The staff helped store cycles. It did mean a trip to Little Chef for breakfast which added cost.

Saturday 22nd July

Name: Travelodge
Address: Easington Nr Stroud, Stonehouse, GL10 3SQ
SW Rating: It's a travelodge. It did the job and for the number in our party, is quite cheap. The staff helped store cycles. It did mean a trip to Little Chef for breakfast which added cost.

Sunday 23rd July

Name: Travelodge
Address: Riverside Retail Park, Hankridge Farm, Taunton , TA1 2LR
Telephone: 0870 191 1556
SW Rating: It's a travelodge. It did the job and for the number in our party, is quite cheap. The staff helped store cycles. It did mean a trip to Little Chef for breakfast which added cost.

Monday 24th July

Name: Travelodge
Address: Sourton Cross, Okehampton, EX20 4LY
SW Rating: It's a travelodge. It did the job and for the number in our party, is quite cheap. The staff helped store cycles. It did mean a trip to Little Chef for breakfast which added cost.

Tuesday 25th July

Bryn and Edward's accommodation: -

Name: Aquarius Guest House
Address: 29 Henver Road, Newquay, Cornwall, TR7 3DG
Telephone: 01637 851471
SW Rating: Not recommended. The hosts seemed put out that we were there at all. There was a glass door to the bedroom. Towels were reluctantly provided. The breakfast was greasy. The only poor accommodation we found during our trip.

Dan, Gary and Matt's accommodation: -

Name: Treloy touring Park
Address: Treloy Tourist Park, Newquay, Cornwall, TR8 4JN
Telephone: 01637 872063
Website: <http://www.treloy.co.uk/>
SW Rating: Excellent. A good camp site with all the amenities you'd expect. There is an RAF airbase next door but we felt this didn't have any impact on anybody's enjoyment.

Final Words

Some final thoughts from each of us.

Gary

As I wrote the drivel I'm trying to pass off as a ride journal I have little to add here.

The other guys however wanted to add some comments, so below are the ramblings of the other team members.

No need to say why I had to do the ride. It was something I was just going to do, Mum's passing gave the organisation of the trip a whole new context. Friends and family wanting to get involved to honour Mum's memory helped ensure that we were never going to fail.

There were some highs and lows. I felt pretty low approaching Settle but then the feeling of completing the day was also quite a highlight. The fantastic reception we got at Land's End made it worth the entire trip, the exhaustion and the saddle soreness.

There is nothing I'd have done differently. Well I might have taken a few more days, 18 to 21 days would've give us more time to explore the country, but otherwise, nothing.

There are many things I took out of this ride. The wonderful sights, wonderful people and the will to do it all again.

So check in to the Sheila's Wheelers website and see what challenge Sheila's Wheelers set themselves for 2008.

Bryn

I had known Sheila for many years and I had watched her illness gradually affect her more and more. Throughout she remained cheerful and never felt sorry for herself. I unconsciously noted this but never thought about it. Sheila just did what Sheila did. When the vicar at her funeral spoke about her courage it was if someone had slapped me in the face, and I was taken aback. She was a courageous lady I just hadn't recognised it until then. This was such a shock to me that I felt very guilty that I hadn't recognised what had been straring me in the face all through her illness. I wanted to pay my own tribute to this courageous lady which is why I volunteered to drive the van. I couldn't do the ride but I could help those who did. It would be my own personal tribute to a very special lady.

I expected and got good company, beautiful scenery, meeting new people. I didn't expect the feeling of pride I felt when you had come through difficult parts of the trip, the constant sound of Tarzan's cry as Matt's irritating ring-tone every five minutes as his phone kept ringing, how nice some of the digs were and how truly awful Little Chefs are.

The infamous Settle day started in Carlisle where I went round the castle while waiting for

the service wash to be collected. Really hot day. I travelled down the motorway in the early afternoon and peeled off to start the journey through the Yorkshire dales to Settle. By now it was boiling hot. I couldn't make contact with the team and had no idea where they were. Whether they were waiting for me, whether they were trying to contact me, whether they had finished and were waiting for their luggage (unlikely). It was now a boiling day and I was driving in, what had turned out to be, a combination of oven and sauna. I wasn't sure whether I was being roasted or steamed. I was driving as fast as I could down small and narrow roads that would give you a sharp right turn followed by a sharp left turn whilst all the time it was either a steep climb or a steep fall. I eventually had to stop in a small town/village where I bought three cold drinks and downed them in one go and then bought another three to drink in the van – that's how hot it was! I eventually reached Settle about tea time booked into the digs and went to find somewhere to eat for myself and the lads. It had been a tough day for me so what had it been like for them? They eventually staggered in around about half past eight and I had been standing outside the pub waiting for them. I clapped them all in and I didn't think I could have felt any prouder of them as I did then. I was wrong.

The start of the trip was low key, a really really beautiful summers morning, a sense of just taking the first step wherever it would lead. It seemed to be a nice slow and steady start to the trip

The biggest highlight for me was at the end of the trip and watching the four of them after 14 days and god knows how many miles ride line abreast towards the finishing line. If I felt proud of them in Settle it was nothing to how I felt about them now. I know it was emotional for them, it was certainly emotional for me - which turned to amazement when Eddie tried to run me down.

Other highlights - cresting a rise and seeing the Yorkshire dales laid out before me - stunning view. The lovely people we met whether it was Kirstie in Luss who did our washing and was so helpful or Arthur who got in the van with me to show me how to overcome a one way system that I had been going round and round to get to a laundrette that wasn't far away. The young couple I gave a lift to who inadvertently got out with my camera and then ran back to give it to me before I drove away. Getting to know Daniel and Matt and Gary better and being even more impressed with their strengths.

What should we have done differently - We should have started earlier each day - we should have got cracking!

Edward

At the beginning of the ride I was apprehensive. We were at the furthest point from Land's End on mainland Britain and had it all to do. We needed to get cracking. I wanted to get the first day under our belts, get up the next day and do it again. I felt confident that we'd complete our task.

For me, the most difficult part spanned several days. Days 2 and 3 were tough getting back into the saddle following the big miles we had already put in. Not to mention the

ride to Settle.

I felt proud to be part of the ride. It bought out a pride in Sheila, pride in myself for achieving this after not being on a bike for over 20 years until I started the training. I felt pride in my four team members. And a special pride in Dan for who kept going in spite of all the problems he encountered.

My expectations were confirmed leaving Scotland, we had covered over a third of the route and it felt like we would accomplish our targets.

Some of the highlights included cycling along Loch Ness, though it was hilly and the roads in poor condition. Gary said this part would be easy, nice and flat. He lied. On a non cycling subject I enjoyed the bowling at Crewe. I wasn't looking forward to it and considered giving it a miss. It turned out to be good fun and a welcome distraction. Also meeting up with family and friends at Ludlow. Keith and Karen, Mick and Jan, Sharon and Andrew and Tom who turned up with our Team T-Shirts.

I felt for Gary when he blamed himself for the tough route through Settle. We felt that we'd pushed it too hard that day and Gary took the blame upon himself as he planned most of the route. But we agreed the route and were happy before we set off. We didn't blame him and felt the day quite an achievement. At least after the fact we did!

We did it, and I'd do it again.

Dan

After the first few miles when my knee first gave in the pain was excruciating. I didn't think I'd finish the first day, let alone the entire ride. As we're all aware by now, in addition to my knee I had a couple of other problems, but the great support I had from the team and my family along with the thought of letting everyone down kept me going.

The most difficult part was, err, all of it. It all seemed worse when things were going wrong but I had to just take the rough with the smooth, and "get cracking"

I felt a bit unprepared looking back and thought it would be a lot easier than it was and expected my fitness level to rise with each day. If only!

But there were highlights. And this more than made up for all my problems. The day after meeting Brummie family who we met in Fort William, seeing them cheer us on during a long ascent made me feel very proud and quite emotional. I think there were tears running down face for the next half mile. Just enjoying a couple of pain free days was quite a highlight. But of all the highs of the ride, crossing the finish line was by far the greatest highlight, of the ride and my life. It was tinted with the sadness of it being over but the atmosphere of the finish line was electric, I felt famous!

If I was to do anything differently, I'd change just one thing, and that would be to change the mode of transport from a cycle to a motor bike.

I'd like to finish off by thanking all who supported us and all that were generous enough to donate to our charities. I would like to thank my team mates for making the whole

experience all the more enjoyable. I'd like to thank Bryn for his support (running off for bike spares or bandages for my injuries) and encouragement when things went wrong.

Matt

The most difficult part I found was four fold; Berridale Brae (where my lungs nearly exploded!), the second day when I put my arse into the seat and it felt like a razor blade, Settle (of course) especially when we had seen those signs with about 8 miles left then we seemed to ride another 5 and the next sign still said 8 miles, and being without the family.

Expectations were of extreme excitement at doing such a mammoth event. I did seriously underestimate how difficult it was going to be though as I thought we were well trained! not!

Three highlights have got to be finishing the ride; I don't cry very often but seeing all those people, friends, family and strangers just wanting to congratulate us and welcome us home was just very humbling and certainly brought a tear to my eye. Elation at finishing but sadness that it was all over! The feeling of how much you really do miss your family. Absence really does make the heart fonder!

Second highlight has got to be seeing Bryn standing on the side of the road clapping us into Settle after such a tough day. It was such a sense of relief and achievement. I will really never forget that day!

Third highlight was both the scenery and the company. The scenery at times made me feel very humble and appreciate how beautiful this country is. The friendliness and generosity of the folks we saw on the ride and last but not least my team mates who helped me through this experience and kept a smile on my face throughout!

Lowest moment was Settle and those sign posts!

We should have avoided Settle:) Only joking I am so glad we did that-memories eh! that was character building!

I really don't think I would have changed anything. The only thing that came to mind was the Travel lodge but they seemed to add to the adventure somehow! Usually having to cycle down dual carriageways or having a beer in the garden!

Only other comments are that I will never forget those 12 odd days in the sweltering heat. It has been my greatest achievement to date and is certainly the hardest. Character building is built on these type of journeys and the team we had certainly made it easier.

Only other thing to say is when's the next ball breaker:)

