

In the Mountains



The North Bucks Road Club Newsletter
Autumn 2006 #11
www.northbucksroadclub.org.uk



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What's On

Not much!
(except club nights and roller racing)

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Editorial

Once again I find myself apologising for lateness. Recent updates to the website and this newsletter have been slow. This time my excuse is just lack of time, due in part to organising my first ever time trial.

Now, while Ian Stokes is by now a past master of organising important and complicated national events, the same most definitely cannot be said for me. I found the whole thing rather stressful, not least the late sorting of the marshals, and on the day some weather issues. Still, no accidents and some good times were set by riders. I'd like to take the opportunity to thank club members who turned out to help on the day.

Our resident mile eater Steve Abrahams, has turned into a literary giant, turning out a huge article again that I've printed in small print to fit it in! In contrast for this issue, I have a bit of a shortage of images for the larger articles.

There are three things to draw your attention to. Firstly, the club dinner and presentation is to be held on 10th November – see separate announcement. Secondly, Chris Hartley has organised a roller racing league complete with practice sessions for those of us (like me) who have never actually ridden rollers before. Thirdly, Ian Stokes says the recent club clothing order has been delivered, including a batch of track mitts.

One other thing - there is a copy of

the 2006 membership form attached - I don't know if the annual subs have gone up for 2007, as I was unable to attend the AGM this year, but this is the best I could manage at short notice.

At the end of a rather disappointing season for me, marred by too much work and work-related travelling, Gerry and I managed our best placing at the Duo Normand 2-up time trial - second place in the veterans category. I may well manage a write-up for the next issue. In contrast to our three prior rides in this event, the weather was pretty nasty (wet and very windy), though we seemed to thrive on it. Unfortunately it seemed to dampen the crowds' enthusiasm a bit.

Now, I'm back to training in the garage in dark evenings, and next season seems a long way away.

Perhaps Chris' s roller racing with re-kindle a bit of enthusiasm.

I hope to get the next full-length newsletter out in time for Christmas, but I may start doing intermediate news-sheets to keep people informed of club events if they are unable to access the web pages.

Robert

NORTH BUCKS ROAD CLUB ANNUAL DINNER 2005

Friday 10 November 2005

7 p.m. for 8 p.m.

at

Splinters Carvery,

Wavendon Golf Club

Menu: 3 course Carvery

Vegetarian option

bar

Tickets £15 per head. To book
please contact Bryan Scarborough on
01908 379285 or 07734 176779
or any Committee Member

Brian Hill's L'Etape Du Tour 2006

I haven't been doing this sport long enough to call myself a cyclist so this account of the 2006 Etape du Tour is more of a layman's view, I hope that those of you looking for some great technical masterpiece will not be too disappointed.

Sure I have done some riding - as a student I had loaded my second-hand "racer" up with camping gear, clothing and food and toured Ireland, Germany and Holland for weeks at a time with a couple of mates. I'd even ridden from John O'Groats to Land's End, but that was in 1985 and the intervening years had seen me spending most of my sporting life playing football and then running.

I followed the sport from a distance, watching Le Tour on the TV and going to various street races and the Tour of Britain on occasions and promising myself that one year I would go and watch the real thing in the Alps.

So it was that in 2004 I found myself standing halfway up a 1st Categorie climb not far from Geneva and watching US Postal lead Lance Armstrong to yet another stage victory in that year's race. I began to get the bug.

The following April I took the plunge and, in Phil Corley's shop, I tried to explain to a member of staff that I knew nothing about bikes but wanted something that would get me over a French mountain.

Brakes that double up as gear levers, triple chainsets and carbon forks were a whole new world to me but I left the shop £700 lighter and the proud owner of a new bike.

In August my entry to L'Etape was confirmed and my training was underway. The route was announced in October - 116 miles including Col D'Izoard and a finish on Alpe d'Huez.

A few days later on a Sunday morning club ride to Ashridge I began to get sharp pains in my left knee whenever I tried to push hard - I didn't ride again for four months whilst specialists and physio's tried to find out what was wrong.

In February I was able to manage 45 minutes on a trainer in the gym without any pain and by March I ventured out onto the roads - "but no hills" my physio told me. Plans to build a base of endurance and then do some UK Sportives had gone out of the window

and I decided to try and combine long slow distances with sessions in the Chilterns doing repetitions of the climb to Ivinghoe Beacon on Saturdays and the club run on Sundays. The latter lengthened by taking more and more convoluted routes between my home in Wing and the clubhouse. In midweek I rode as often as other commitments would let me and slowly began to increase my fitness levels over the course of the next few weeks.

July 10th came around far too soon and at 6:30am, against the expectations of both me and my medical entourage, I was on the starting line in Gap with 7,500 other riders. As the announcer counted down to the start the sun began to appear from behind the mountains in the distance ahead of us, a hint of the heat we were all going to experience later.

My objective was simply to finish and I knew exactly what times and speeds I needed to achieve at various checkpoints on the route if I was to avoid the broom wagon and make it to Alpe d'Huez. My mental arithmetic abilities were immediately put to the test as it took 18 minutes to reach the start line and a further 10 before we really started to ride fluently.

The first part of the course was 35 miles of undulating roads and I moved from group to group, avoiding the occasional crash and the constant flow of faster riders racing like an enormous team time trial on my left hand side, whilst keeping on schedule. On the descent to the Lake of Serre Poncon my computer recorded a speed of 41 miles an hour and I kept my heart rate at around a comfortable 135 (that's as technical as this is going to get). The plan was to conserve energy for the climbs to come but go quickly enough to give me some time in hand and, more importantly, to put some distance between myself and the broom wagon.

We crossed the lake on a huge low bridge and as we negotiated a left hand turn and short climb into the town of Embrun the mountains began to loom up menacingly.

More opportunities to slipstream over the next 20km meant that, even with the congestion at the start I was still slightly ahead of my original schedule.

The Tour de France appears to run like a well-oiled machine - the Etape less so.

At the 55km point the road narrowed and steepened suddenly and this was therefore the natural place for the first feed station. In the inevitable congestion

we ground to a halt and everyone was forced off their bikes to walk for a hundred metres or so to the feed station itself. To add a little interest two motorcyclists and an ambulance decided to choose the moment that I arrived to try and force their way through the melee of cyclists. At least the chaos here prepared me for my first sight of an Etape feed station.

As I said earlier I have done a bit of running and remember well the efficient organisation of feed stations on the London Marathon route, supplying drinks to 26,000 runners with the majority of them not even having to break stride. The French do it differently...

I leant my bike up against some railings and forced my way through the crowds of people swamping the tables. Somehow I grabbed enough bottles of water to replenish my supplies, stuffed a couple of (pre-cut) bananas into my jersey pockets and an orange into my mouth before setting off again toward the Izoard.

I knew that I could ignore the sign just beyond the feed station that announced Col d'Izoard but 20 km further on the climb began.

The Rapha guide to the route describes the climb as beautiful and the author was right. Sure, it's tough but the road winds through Alpine pastures up towards the tiny villages where the locals were out in force to applaud and shout encouragement. As the villages get left behind the climb becomes steeper and road markers spell out the gradient (it always seemed to be 9%) and the altitude. The latter increased far too slowly for my liking but eventually we reached the hairpin sections at the head of the valley. The Rapha writer reckoned you could hear the cries of marmottes here - he didn't allow for the fact that the sound was drowned out by the heavy breathing and gasping of hundreds of cyclists.

Even at this stage people were walking - they had no chance of ever seeing Alpe d'Huez, still almost 100km away.

The Casse Deserte was disappointing - the green was replaced by rock but not quite the lunar landscape I had been promised. Up ahead were the flags of the summit and the drinks station.

Reaching the peak of my first ever hors categorie climb was a great feeling and even the fact that the drinks station had run out of liquid refreshment didn't dampen my spirits as I put on a jacket for the descent to Briancon.

As I began the hairpin turns at the top a helicopter swung into view and followed my progress from a height of just a hundred feet or so, staying with me for the first few turns. Maybe a television camera or, more likely, an air ambulance, tipped off to keep an eye on me "just in case".

The descent to Briancon was fast and twisting at the top, straightening out lower down. I passed cyclists at the side of the road clutching inner tubes – their race probably over. Halfway down I stopped to take my jacket off – it was nearly 1pm and the temperature was rising as my altitude dropped.

Briancon marked the first elimination

zone and I arrived around 30 minutes ahead of the cut off time – pretty much in line with my own schedule.

Another feed station – same old chaos - and I moved off into the town.

Some members of my family had come out to see the race and were waiting for me on the steep climb out of Briancon.

Seeing them gave me a lift even though my wife looked worried and my son-in-law told me that I was "only" an hour behind Chris Hoy.

My Dad, who had stood with me on the Forclaz two years ago, shouted encouragement. One of the strongest memories I have of running the London

Marathon in 1998, apart from taking 15 minutes off my pb, was my Dad suddenly appearing from nowhere at the side of the road near Cleopatra's Needle just as I was beginning to really tire and the memory came back to me at this point.

The Lauteret is "only" a 2nd categorie climb but it came with plenty of warnings as to the difficulties it posed and they were right. It is long, predominantly straight - so that you can see cyclists miles further up the road - and there is an almost constant headwind. It's tough and for 30km I had to grind out each metre as the temperature rose and I tried not to think of the final challenge that lay ahead. The climb was made in almost total silence as everyone focused on getting this part of the route over with.

Just before the Col is a snow tunnel and a couple of turns and the wind increased as the road steepened. I arrived at the top still with around 20 minutes in hand and confident that I would be able to make up time on the long, fast descent that followed. I took the opportunity to refill my drinks bottles from a fountain and to eat a combination of a power bar and fruit that I had picked up at Briancon.

The descent was almost 30km of fast twisting roads through gorges and tunnels and alongside huge lakes. Some joker added in a couple of short uphill sections to keep us keen – always immediately round a bend after a tunnel for maximum effect – the groans of the riders ahead gave the game away.

A long straight section led us towards Bourg d'Oisans and the bottom of Alpe d'Huez. I grabbed more food at the station and then moved on the hundred metres or so to cross the timing mat at the final elimination point – I was safe now from the dreaded broom wagon.

Nothing can quite prepare you for the shock of L'Alpe d'Huez. I road towards it, turned left and was confronted by the sight of a long straight road, rising at over 10% ahead of me. I knew it was going to be there but after 175km of cycling it looked vertical to me.

The Rapha guide says, "L'Alpe d'Huez may not be the highest, steepest or longest climb in the world but it is the most famous". Never let the facts get in the way of a good story - it is all of these things, and as the temperature reached 40 degrees it became brutal. The road resembled something from a disaster movie in which hundreds of refugees are fleeing from their homes. On this occasion every refugee was, for some reason, in possession of a bike.



People were walking, sitting on the walls alongside the road and even lying down. I discovered that not only is it possible to ride at 3mph but that you can overtake other cyclists who are, somehow, managing to go even slower.

“After turn 16 the road eases” says Rapha – who wrote that rubbish?

There are torrents of water running down from the mountainside at regular intervals and these were being used to fill up water bottles. Such was the heat that within 20 minutes the water in my bottle was too warm to drink comfortably and I found myself regularly refilling my supplies. At one point, on a wider stretch of the road I passed a family walking up towards the top. The Father handed me a plastic cup full of water and waved me on my way.

Someone was manning an old fashioned water pump and a householder, whose gardens overlooked the road, had turned all his sprinklers on to provide a temporary shower that everyone took the opportunity to ride through.

At around turn 7 I looked up and saw the buildings of the village above me – much too far above me to give me any comfort that I was nearing the end.

However, I finally reached the sign announcing the resort of Alpe d’Huez and the road began to become less steep. We passed under the ski lifts and into the village itself, over a roundabout before a left hand turn and the finish banner with the word “Arrive” emblazoned on it.

I was too tired to take my transponder off my ankle and could just about summon up the energy to point to it so that one of the officials could locate it. A member of the group I had travelled with came over the line a minute or so after me and we made our way slowly back to our coaches and the rest of the party.

7,540 cyclists left Gap and around 20% of them didn’t make it as far as the finish line. Hundreds were stopped on the Izoard, a similar number at the foot of Alpe d’Huez and some even on the final climb itself. A combination of the heat

and the severity of the course made it, according to the experts, one of the toughest Etapes ever held.

At round 11 o’clock that night I made my way slowly through the deserted streets of Briancon, where I was staying, to meet up with my family. As I walked along the same hill I had ridden up 10 hours earlier my Dad came out to meet me so that he could be the first to offer his congratulations. I might not be a cyclist yet but any sport that can make your Dad proud of you at 43 must be worth pursuing.

I’ve already posted my entry for next year – rumour has it that it might include Mont Ventoux – now that will be hot!



Glen's American Trip

by Glen McMenamin

Me and two mates decided we wanted to do a guided MTB tour of the American Rockies which was advertised in the back of Mountain Bike Rider Magazine. It started in Denver, and finished in Durango, 400 miles in 10 days of cycling, mainly off road with some jeep track and tarmac. We booked a year in advance, and when the day came that we arrived in Denver, Colorado to start the ride. It was a guided ride, with a support van dropping us off, and picking us up at each section of the ride. Most days started at around 9-10am, and finished at 5-6 pm, and usually consisted of cycling from an altitude of around 10,000 ft up to a pass of around 12,000 ft. This would be a typical day, and the climbs could last up to 3-4 hours with stops.

Once at the top of the passes, we usually had to contend with snow across the track, which is quite weird when you are in shorts and t-shirts, then across the pass and down into a forest for the payback of some heavenly technical single-track. The altitude was a killer, as even walking up stairs made you breathe hard enough, but cycling up mountains in these conditions made you feel breathless to the point of sickness sometimes, as you never seemed to get your breathing under full control.

We cycled the following passes:

- Georgia Pass
- Searl Pass
- Taylor Pass
- Star pass
- Hagerman Pass
- Cinamon pass (aborted due to lightning!!)
- Engineer mountain

We cycled through the following ski resorts:

- Breckenridge
- Copper Mountain
- Crested Butte
- Aspen
- Durango Mountain resort

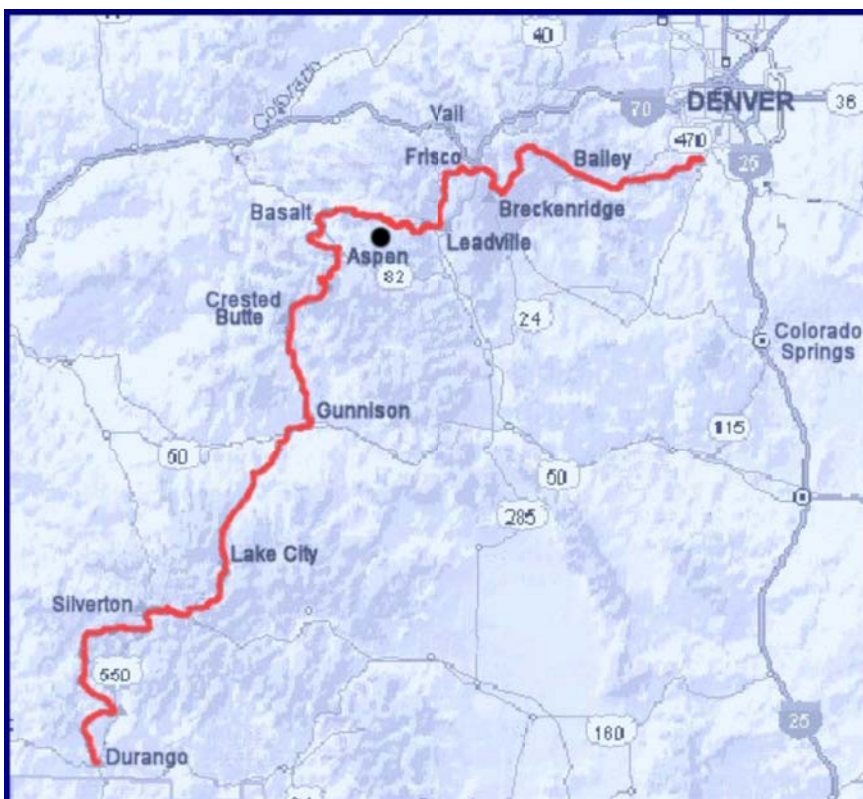
All in all, it was a great adventure, and was amazingly difficult at times,



to the point I wondered why I was paying for such torture!! reckon I put a years worth of use on my MTB - in just 10 days of cycling, I found I had gone through 2 sets of tyres and a set of brake pads, (not to mention the 30-40 litres of sports drink).

At the end in Durango, I decided it was certainly worth it, and looking back I don't think I will ever

experience such scenery/terrain again in my lifetime. A full itinerary of the ride can be found here: <http://rockymountain.co.uk/biking2004/rockiestour.htm>



The next step... **by Steve Abraham**

After my last attempt at riding the Grand Triangle in the minimum time of 8 days in 1998, then failing to be able to complete the ride in 10 days, I had resigned myself to the fact that I couldn't do it. Perhaps I needed to work on my speed more?

In 2004 I managed to ride 2000 miles in 11 days while riding El Supremo's 1000k and the Mersey 24, plus a small tour of Wales. This came about by learning about sleep and sleeping patterns. I wasn't as fit then as I was in 1998, but I was more clued up. Then in 2005, I ended up beating my PB for the Mersey 24 by 26 miles. I was less fit then than I was in 1998 when I rode 416 miles, but I was much less tired.

I realised that when I was much fitter in 1998, I was much more tired, but I didn't fully appreciate how tired I really was. Thinking back to 2004 made me realise that an 8 day Triangle, or at least a 10 day ride was within my capabilities.

The year got off to a bad start. My kitchen needed some DIY, which I eventually had to stop because I wasn't getting very fit. If I'd have completed my DIY, I would have been struggling to get to the start of Audax rides through lack of fitness.

My fitness didn't get as good as I'd have liked, but I can't really say that I was unfit. I managed to do my second best 24 hour. In doing this, my comparable lack of fitness showed through, but my night ride went well, so I knew that I'd done a good job of managing my sleep. I went on to ride the New Forest 1000k, clocking up over 1500 miles in some 10 days, including a few inactive days.

My sleep management went a bit wonky in the next few weeks leading up to the Triangle. Getting to bed too late and having to get to work in the morning. My mileage was low compared to 1998. I would have been on at least 15000 then, I was on about 8000 when I started this time, and I started both rides at the same time of year. I hoped that I had the legs for it.

Milton Keynes Council, in their wisdom had poured loose stones all over their leisure routes. On riding home from my mothers on the Sunday before the start of the Triangle; a moments discrepancy with navigation, hesitation, last minute change of mind, sent my front wheel sliding sideways as it sunk into a pit of loose stones.

The end result was a 3" scar on my right arm, which was about half an inch deep at worst plus a few lesser scars in the vicinity. This was on the part of my elbow which rests on the pads of my tri bars.

I was glad of the suspension of my mountain bike when riding to work for the next few days. Riding over bumps was uncomfortable. A few days later it settled down. I was very concerned that I wouldn't be able to use my tri bars for the Triangle. It would be a heavy blow to the ride because the tri bars are my primary riding position. I considered abandoning the attempt, but thought that I should give it a try. The worst that would happen would be that I go home early and go touring instead, so I didn't have

anything to lose by not trying. Plus, my arm might get a lot better further down the road and I'd be less than 2 days ride home for the first 3-400 miles of the ride.

I wasn't carrying a brevet card this time. I sort of wanted to, but my usual lack of organisation meant that I never got round to sending off for one in time. The ride was what mattered to me. Plus I wasn't overly confident that I'd want to stop to collect till receipts or even an old fashioned stamp.

Most of Friday was spent preparing the bike and myself for the off at midnight. It took much longer than expected and I eventually went to bed at 2000 for a 3 hour sleep. I would have liked more but it was too late now. As I lay in bed, tactics and plans started racing round my head until I eventually went to sleep. I reckon I got about an hour and a half.

When I awoke, I had some coffee, dressed my wounded arm and checked that I had everything I needed. I decided against using panniers and stayed with my plans of 1998 to travel with just a saddlebag and stay minimalist.

I set off at 0020, 20 minutes later than planned. Nothing new there then, actually, 20 minutes late is quite good for me. It was the first time I'd ridden my Dave Yates since finishing the 1000k 3 weeks earlier. I was using my new Goldtech double sided fixed wheel and some new Specialised Armadillo tyres. I had a 78" gear for the A30 and A68, with a bigger than usual 89" for the rest of the ride, which was driven by a new chain. My 17 tooth sprockets were worn and I didn't want to use them on a double sided hub and end up with a rough transmission for most of the ride. Plus, if the 89" fixed got too much, I could always go down to 78. I was glad I had this much difference in gear size without having to alter the length of my chain. It was a 2 tooth jump, but I reckon I could have a 3 tooth jump without changing my chain. For lighting, I had two 1W Bikehut lights on the front and a Cateye rear, with a spare Cateye rear stashed in the saddlebag. The front lights had Lithium batteries and I had some spare Lithium batteries in the saddlebag. The rear just had Alkalines. This was my first attempt of 3 Triangles on a fixed wheel bike

My attitude to the ride had changed since 1998. I was now very laid back about the whole thing and had no real schedule to follow. I had the ride of '98 to compare with and could monitor my progress with memories of that ride.

I could just about use my tri bars if I rested my arms on the pads closer to my wrists. It wasn't ideal, but I was mobile. It did mean that I couldn't pull on the tri bars like I usually do and it wasn't as comfortable as my usual position, but there was always the possibility of improving later on.

I was hoping to do evens to London and hopefully keep it up to Dover, but riding down the A5 in the night, I was riding at just over evens where I used to ride at 30mph when I was commuting about 6 years earlier. I held onto 18 to London but wasn't too concerned.

The traffic lights through London were a real nuisance and I came out of

London with my average down to 16. It was enough, but I would have liked 18 at least. But never mind, it's early days yet. I still have about 2000 miles to go.

I went wrong in the Dartford area which added a few extra miles and I started feeling drowsy as the new day dawned. I stopped for a coffee at a garage and a doze in the sun further down the road, then continued to Dover, where I had a stop in another garage. I was 3 hours later than I hoped and an hour later than I expected. I wasn't too worried about it though.

Next was to get onto the A272 and head West towards Lands End. I remembered this as a real high point of my 1998 ride. I felt like I was flying on the A272, but this time it didn't feel special, although I was going well enough. After a few hours, I stopped for lunch at The World of Water. A well known café to anyone who has ridden any of El Supremo's events. I had a good feed there and set off again. I wasn't going as quickly as I'd have liked but my arm wasn't getting any worse. I started moving it further up the pad towards my elbow. It still wasn't good, but it was getting better. I could at least change position on it a little.

The ride along the A272 was OK, if a little slow. I was well behind 1998 and also decided on an overnight stop for tonight. My original plan was to ride through tonight, get to Lands End midday tomorrow and try for 100 miles back to the Devon border. Given my drowsy spell in the morning I thought it better to sleep now.

I spent over an hour searching country lanes and small villages for accommodation with no luck, despite all the brown signposts promising Hotels and Inns, all of which were full. I searched Petersfield for accommodation, but couldn't find any. I made my way to the A3 where there was a service station and joy of joys, a Travel Inn. Unfortunately the Travel Inn wasn't open, so it was out with the map. My spiral bound glovebox size road atlas of Britain is very handy and fits easily into my saddlebag. New Arlesford wasn't too far and I know there are two Hotels there. So I rode to New Arlesford. It was getting dark and late. The Swan Hotel was full, so I tried the Hotel over the road. I'd just missed the last bed by half an hour. The proprietor of the Hotel kindly phoned a few B&Bs and came up with one on the outskirts of Winchester. I rode about 7 more miles and diverted up a narrow lane to the B&B. I was told to keep left to find the B&B and so I did, only to come out on a dual carriageway. I retraced to a turning I had passed and followed it to the B&B. I arrived at almost 11pm. In 1998, I'd reached Winchester at about 5pm.

I went to bed straight away having not eaten since my café stop at the World of Water.

I had no trouble waking up the next morning and was glad to have some breakfast. I set off just before 0900 and calculated that I was now 16 hours behind where I was in 1998. I was confident that I would catch it up again. I realised that 8 days was going to be unlikely due to lack of fitness and sleep before the ride. But 10 days looked very possible.

It wouldn't be long now before I joined the A30 and just had to follow that road all the way to Land's End. Absolutely easy navigation then, although I still managed to go slightly wrong by trying to go straight through Shaftsbury and ended up carrying my bike down a flight of steps, back onto the A30.

I was getting hungry and stopped for just a sandwich in a petrol garage to keep me going. I didn't want to stop until it started getting hilly, so that I could change my gear as well as eat in one stop.

I decided that I'd stop at Sherbourne if I saw anything, which I didn't, so I pressed on to Yeovil, where I took a more active search for food. On the way there, the dual carriageway was down to one lane because of a Triathlon. I wonder how they manage to do this, and whether the CTT could do this for their National Championship events. It'd be nice if they could when I ride the Mersey 24 hour. After a search around Yeovil, I found the Tescos with a café and stopped there for a leisurely lunch. Then I turned my back wheel around, to give me my 78" gear, in preparation for the Devon and Cornish hills.

I was soon glad that I did as the hills grew, the further west I went. I arrived in Exeter in the early evening, just under 12 hours behind 1998. I'd clawed back over 4 hours. I intended to follow the A30, but the road system of Exeter makes it very awkward on a bicycle, because it sends you onto the M5. I ended up going to Crediton instead. I wanted another feed there. The café at the train station, used in Mike Hunting's 400 and 200 was shut. I vaguely remember Ian Hennessy telling me of a café round here somewhere on his 600, but I didn't bother looking for it. I stopped in a garage for a snack and pressed on to Okehampton. I kept an eye out for a café or restaurant on my way through, but didn't see anything. I knew there was a service station when I rejoined the A30, so I pressed on to there and came upon a Little Chef.

Normally, I avoid these expensive eateries, but it seemed to really appeal to me. I was surprised that my appetite wasn't as huge as normal, so a 2 course feed at the Little Chef seemed to do the trick for me. It was a rather expensive feed, but a welcome one. It was now dark and the Little Chef was about to shut for the night. I was preparing myself for an all night ride down the A30. I visited the petrol garage for some drinks and a few snacks for the night and got going just before 2300.

I followed the old A30 from Okehampton to Launceston which was quiet and pleasant. By the time I rejoined the A30, the traffic had died down and it became an enjoyable ride. I could see lots of stars in the clear night sky. Where I live, there are too many large towns giving off their orangey glow and making it difficult to appreciate how many stars there are in the sky.

Of course, it wasn't long before this changed. First drizzle, then rain. I put on my poncho cape to keep myself warm, dry and snug. It also gave some protection to my Bikehut lights, which aren't too good in the rain.

After a few hours, I stopped under a

bridge on a road which went under the A30 to the services at Indian Queens. I spent an hour or two sleeping under my cape, wearing a full face, "robbers" balaclava (from an army surplus shop, they keep you very warm) and also had a snack before I set off again back into the rainy night. The hills of the A30 didn't seem so bad. I remembered my ride of 1998 and how tired I felt this far into the ride. Although it should be noted that I was still quite a way down on my time of 1998.

The rain fluctuated between light drizzle and steady rain all the way to Penzance, which was reached in the early morning light. The road to Land's End was foggy. On arrival at Land's End I was greeted by a cleaner. I found that nothing was open. "What, you mean I've come all this way, and it's shut?" I thought to myself. I took a few photos with my new digital camera, then I looked at the Hotel, hoping I could get a breakfast there, but it must have been too early. It was about 0700; I looked longingly at the set breakfast tables, then set off back to Penzance for the Tescos I spied on the A30 on the way down here. Tescos cafe opens at 0800 and after taking photos etc, it was gone 0715. If I just roll along, it will be open when I get there, which it was.

I had a leisurely breakfast as I waited for the rush hour traffic to ease off. The lady behind the counter was surprised at the size of my breakfast. I'm sure that I ate more than I paid for. Bacon is very easy to hide under fried eggs, fried bread, hash browns and other bacon rashers. Plus, I don't think they expect anyone to eat as much as I do. I was getting some of my appetite back, but that wasn't surprising as I'd not really eaten anything in the last 10 hours.

I began this day feeling positive. I'd just had a good breakfast; the light headwind I'd been fighting all night was now a tailwind. Also, I was level with my ride of 1998, because I'd stopped in Penzance overnight in 1998. I also felt less tired than I did at this stage in 1998. It was still raining, but I didn't mind. I still had about 1500 miles to go, so the weather was bound to improve somewhere on the ride.

Before I set off from Penzance, I chatted with two women who I thought were doing the End to End. They were doing London to Land's End and were just about to set off to Land's End. I told them that the road was foggy, which didn't please them very much, so I told them that it looked like it was lifting and that they were nearly there now. Then I got going, deciding to take roads through towns and villages to give me a break from the traffic of the A30. I rode through Hale and then followed a lane into Camborne, which I remembered from Ian Hennessey's 600. But after that it was nothing but the A30. The weather improved the further I went until it became sunny and warm. I stopped at a café near Bodmin on the A30. I remember stopping here in 1998 and only going to the shop. This time I had a much more relaxed stop. I was more confident because I remembered feeling very tired here in 1998. I felt a little tired after my night ride, but felt better than I did in 1998, in spite of the fact that in 1998 I'd had a night in bed in Penzance. It was a good sign that my ride

was going well in spite of my lack of fitness.

I was looking forward to Launceston, where I could go back onto the old A30. I was getting fed up with the traffic and the bad driving. I'd just escaped being smashed from behind by someone turning into the slip road of a service station. It didn't seem to occur to them that I would be going slower than them up a steep hill. They jammed their brakes on hard at the last minute. It was only because I try and ride in the middle of the lane when I have an exiting slip road to my left, that they didn't hit me. They scuffed the kerbstones and skidded to a halt alongside me with a look of panic on their face. I calmly told them to slow down earlier, as I continued to lumber up the hill at a grovelling 6mph. Most people on the A30 didn't seem to realise that a dual carriageway has a drive lane and an overtake lane and that you should use the overtake lane for overtaking. There were a good few who do seem to know how to use dual carriageways though. Thankfully, a lot of them were lorry drivers. I had very little, if any bother from the lorries and found pretty much all of them to have good drivers.

Launceston was soon reached and it meant that I could avoid the A30 all the way to Exeter, which pleased me. The ride became much more enjoyable and I could almost use my tri bars as normal. My arm was much better. It wasn't as good as usual, but I could use my normal riding position if I was careful about hitting pot holes. I'd decided to stop either in Bristol or Exeter for an overnight stop. I would have liked to stop in Bristol, but chose Exeter. I was getting a little tired and still had a long way to go yet. I could have got to Bristol, but it would have been late when I got there and it would have been tricky to find accommodation. One thing I have learned is that it's best to get your accommodation before 1700, or they all get full and the later it gets, the more difficult it is to find somewhere. I found the road out of Exeter that I wanted, which was the old A38 and stopped at a Hotel at around 1730. I had a shower then went to the restaurant part of the hotel just as it opened. I had a large steak dinner, washed down with a pint of Guinness, and then went to bed to get as much sleep as I could.

My legs felt a bit stiff walking down the stairs for breakfast. I'd ridden over 600 miles in the last 3 days; 300 miles were on the hilly A30. After breakfast, I turned my back wheel around to give me my 89" fixed and set off for Bristol. I checked my front lights before setting off too. Better to do it now, than wait until it's dark. Neither of them worked. They were OK all the way down to Land's End, but I think that the rain got to them in the end. I knew that there was a Halfords in Hereford on the way out, and if it looked unlikely that I'd reach Hereford before Halfords would be shut, then I could look in Bristol.

I reached Bristol at around midday and spied a Halfords. It was touch and go whether I'd make Hereford in time, so I went in and bought myself a Cateye filament bulb light. They aren't too bright, but I used one in 1995/6, so know that they are pretty reliable, and what to do to bring them round again. I considered buying a large pack of C cells for the light, but when I picked up the packet and

felt the weight, I just bought one spare set of batteries. One set of batteries lasts for 8 hours, so I could get through one night with two sets. I just had to remember to replace my spares when I needed to. I noticed a Kentucky Fried Chicken over the road. Hmm, I quite fancy some chicken, dripping with fat and some chips. So I went in and enjoyed a fat drenched meal. I stopped longer than anticipated, but I could now keep going again for a good few hours before I would stop again. So I made my way to the Severn Bridge. I passed under the Clifton Suspension Bridge on the way. That is the way that the likes of Gethin Butler, Lynne Taylor and Wilco go. They would then go onto the A38 through the Midlands. I chose to go up the A49. End to End record attempts do the A38 at night. I don't know that route and think it could be heavy with traffic in daytime. I know the A49 route to be fast and easy to follow.

The Severn Bridge was easily found. I had to use the southern side of the bridge because of works going on, on my usual northern side.

Because of my stop in Exeter, I was about 13 hours down on 1998. But I remembered in 1998, I really started to struggle at this part of the ride. Now was the time that I would start to make a dent on my ride of 1998. On through Monmouth and along the A466 to Hereford. I clocked 43 mph down one hill, the fastest descent of the ride. I could hardly keep up with the pedals, which told me that I could really do with some more rides on a low gear. I would have gone a lot quicker if I'd have been more supple, but instead I tried to ease back as much as I could and sat as upright as possible to help slow myself down. I've done 45mph on an 83" fixed; I should be able to touch 50 on an 89" I'd have thought. I remembered that hill as being on the Bryan Chapman, when the last control was at Hereford. No wonder I struggled to get up it on my 83" gear. It was easy going to Hereford after that and I was keen to get going up the A49 before I would stop for a feed and prepare for the next night ride. My arm was much better; I could pull on the tri bars if the road surface was good. I could ride over reasonably poor road surfaces with no discomfort too. I made good progress until hunger got the better of me and I stopped in a pub in Church Stretton.

I had a good lunch there. As I did, I tried to rejuvenate one of my Bikehut lights with no success. I got chatting to someone about cycling, who asked me where I was going. I told him about the ride I was doing. This conversation was overheard and I ended up in several conversations about my ride with various clientele. One noticed that I was trying to reboot my front light and showed concern about my pressing on through the night with no lights. I showed them my new purchase from Bristol and switched it on to show them.

I left as it grew dark, after visiting a hole in the wall to refill my almost empty wallet. On through Shrewsbury and past Battlefield roundabout, I saw a shopping complex there. "So that's why the Mersey 24 doesn't come down here any more," I thought to myself. I was now on the Mersey Roads 24 hour course until I would turn off it at

Whitchurch. I passed the Prees by pass, remembering sitting there in 1998 on this ride, feeling very tired indeed and going in and out of consciousness. I felt pretty good now and was starting to gain a bit more time again. I was less than 12 hours behind now. On past Prees Heath, where I slept rough after this year's Mersey 24 hour, the Raven Café was now closed. I had to remember to go straight on at Whitchurch and not go into auto pilot and follow the Mersey 24 course. I did and continued up the A49.

Miles later, I stopped at a petrol garage at around midnight, then continued on my way to Warrington. At the petrol garage, my legs were noticeably stiff and were showing signs of fatigue. I was glad to get to Warrington at night and avoid all the daytime traffic. I was hoping to clear Preston before the rush hour began.

Going through Warrington I hit a hole very hard at about 25mph, which hurt my arm a bit. A few miles later, I noticed that my rear light had gone out. On closer inspection, it had actually gone, or at least half of it had, the important half which contains the batteries and diodes. I sought the spare out of my saddlebag and wrapped sellotape around it to stop this happening again. I'd wondered whether that could happen to one of those lights, now I know, but didn't think it could. I checked my wheels for trueness while I was at it, they were still good.

Onto the A6 and towards Preston, home of the End to End record holder. I reckoned he'd be snuggled up in bed now, he's no fool. I started feeling a little sleepy, so I had a few hours doze before Preston and got going again as day began to break and it started to rain. I got through Preston OK, about 13 hours behind 1998. I seemed to be dawdling and dithering a bit now and was feeling hungry. I'd just ridden about the distance of the End to End myself, somewhat slower than someone else in the locality. I was hoping to get further up the road than I was by now, but decided on taking it easy. The A6 to Lancaster is easy going and I came across a trucker's café. This was just what I needed. A good feed and a sit down in the warm.

After my longish rest and feed, I felt better, but still felt tired. I hoped to get to Edinburgh tonight, but wasn't sure that I'd do it. The A6 is easy going all the way to Carlisle except for Shap Fell, which isn't a hard climb. I remember one of the people in charge of a feed station of the Mersey 24, holding his hand about 2 feet from the ground and telling me, "This is how high the rain was bouncing off the road going over Shap, when Lynn Taylor got her End to End record in 2001." (He was in her support team)

I had it much easier than Lynne did. I was also less than 6 hours behind my 1998 ride. In 1998 I was so tired I ended up sleeping rough all night in Kendal before tackling the climb over the deserted and open Shap Fell. My knowledge of sleeping patterns was starting to pay off now and I should start to chip away more and more at my ride of 1998.

The ride to Carlisle was easy going, but I wasn't going too well, due to tiredness. I hoped that I wouldn't need to stop at the Truckstop in Carlisle, but I did, hoping that it

would revive me a little. I decided that Edinburgh was too far to aim for if I was going to stay in a hotel. I considered stopping at the Carlisle Truckstop and having an early morning start. I consulted the road atlas and decided on staying at the motorway services at Johnstonebridge. I guess that some AUKs stay here before or after the Beattock Audax rides. I took an easy ride for the remaining 30 or so miles, arriving at around 4pm. I checked into the Hotel, then bought some junk food in the petrol garage and ate it in my hotel room. My stiff legs gave me an odd walking style when I walked around the service station, they were tired and I hoped that they wouldn't let me down. Then I showered, re dressed my scarred arm, pulling some of the old scab away with the old dressing, which was looking rather grubby. I noticed that I was passing blood with my stools, which I made a mental note of keeping an eye on, in case it got worse. It did, but never more than a small trickle. Then I went to sleep with the intention of an early start tomorrow morning. I never set any alarm.

I awoke naturally after about 10 hours sleep and after a brief coffee, set off into the cold morning. I was looking forward to the climb of the Devils Beeftub because it would warm me up and I've never ridden it before. On my 1998 triangle, I rode the LEL route to Edinburgh, but after flicking through Lynne Taylor's dad's book on the End to End, found that this route was shorter. The climb didn't warm me as much as I'd liked. It was long and gradual. I thought it was an easy climb, unlike what I'd read in the End to End book. It was certainly shorter and easier than the LEL route. I had the advantage of a night in bed before I rode up it. End to End record riders have a hard ride to get this far and I think they exaggerate the difficulty of Shap and the Devils Beeftub. It was easy going all the way to Edinburgh from the top of the Beeftub. On the approach to Edinburgh, I had a few navigational problems and lost about an hour or so, which put me in a bit of a strop. But I soon regained cheerfulness after crossing the Forth Road Bridge and was going in the right direction again. I was determined to not stop until Perth, which I succeeded in doing. I had a ride around in a fruitless search for a café. I decided on pressing on and hoped to find something further up the road. This came on the outskirts of Perth in the form of a petrol garage. Oh well, I've got to eat. But then, I spied another Kentucky Fried Chicken, which again appealed to me, so I went there.

One good thing about KFC is that you get served very quickly and it meant that I was soon on my way again, ready to take on the A9 and the Pass of Drumochter. I was looking forward to the A9, because I'd heard from George Berwick that Sustrans had built a route on it and it was very good. I took the through town options to avoid the A9 then followed the Sustrans route, which I didn't like, so went back onto the A9. The Sustrans route didn't allow for fast riding and sent me down some stairs. I rejoined the Sustrans route on climbing the Pass of Drumochter. It was on a specially built track and was reasonable if you went slowly, which is what I was doing. It was good if you are doing

12mph or less, which was enough for me. But if I wanted a fast ride, I'd have taken the A9. I read that Wilco and Lynne Taylor were doing 17 up this climb on their tandem End to End. They'd have come to grief going that fast on this cycle track. Near the top of the Pass of Drumochter, I saw something on the cycle path. It was an unfolded Ordnance Survey Routemaster map of Northern Scotland. Lucky days!! Finders keepers!! A little damp from the rain, but in pretty good condition.

After the Pass of Drumochter, I diverted into Dalwhinnie. I remembered a good café there, which was now boarded up. There was another café there which I didn't remember from before, but I didn't need a feed yet, so I pressed on, following the old A9 where I could. By the time I got to Aviemore, I was starting to get Peckish, but decided to press on to Inverness before it got dark.

Descending into Inverness, I spied a pub restaurant on the left and went there for a feed. I was surprised how small my appetite was considering all the miles I'd done. While riding into the pub, I spied a Tesco's and decided to pay them a visit after my dinner. After my dinner, I went to the loo to put on my night clothes, and started having a nose bleed. This was a bit of a nuisance, but I relieved it and got going to Tesco's. I wanted a few drinks and snacks for the night. Plus I was getting chilly, so I wanted some extra clothing. I was hoping for a cheap coat, but I ended up buying 3 tee shirts. I also bought some industrial rubber gloves because when I left the Hotel this morning, my hands were cold until I almost got to Edinburgh.

I shortly got going and crossed the bridge onto the Black Isle and crossed another bridge towards Alness. I remembered sleeping rough here in 1998, or at least spending a miserable night shivering and trying to sleep. I decided that I should have a rest a little further down the road. I was level with my ride of 1998, the difference being, that, although I felt tired, I was nothing like as tired as I was in 1998. I slept for about 6 hours under my poncho cape and wearing my balaclava, until I could convince myself to get going. The hills towards Bonar Bridge did a good job of warming me up and my rubber gloves just about kept my hands warm. For the first time on this ride, I was ahead of my ride of 1998. This was a good morale booster and from here on, I considered the ride as a relaxing holiday. Well, actually, I just relaxed a bit more as I still had about 800 miles to go yet. I stopped for a pee and to admire the view before descending to Bonar Bridge, where I kept going. I was hoping to find a café open, as I was pretty hungry, but I decided on holding out to Durness, almost 70 miles away, if I didn't find anywhere open. I passed the Overscaig Hotel, which is in the middle of nowhere and looks like somewhere I'd like to stay for a night. It's had some work done to it since I passed here in 1998 and has somehow lost some of its charm.

By the time I got to Laxford Bridge, I was growing concerned about my lack of food intake. There are a few hills to get from here to Durness and I was concerned about getting the knock, as I was feeling hungry. I had a brief rest and demolished a packet of Garibaldi biscuits, then started climbing. It

wasn't as bad as I'd remembered and I arrived at Durness in time for lunch.

I ordered two dinners and began to feed myself. After a while I was struggling to eat. It wasn't the amount of food, it was just that my mouth was very dry and it was like trying to eat a plateful of crackers. But I eventually managed it and was on my way again, ready to get a few more miles done before I would find a hotel for the night. The North West coast of Scotland was hillier than I'd remembered. I stopped to buy some drinks to solve my dry mouth and continued. The map threatened me with arrowed climbs. I was still on my 89" fixed, but decided that I could always walk if I had to. I struggled a bit up a few hills, but I never walked any. The hills seemed to continue further than I remembered from 1998 too. I was tired and was growing impatient and started counting the miles to Thurso, where I was going to stop the night. I tried to concentrate on enjoying myself, which helped and I arrived in Thurso in good time, a few hours in front of my ride of 1998.

I searched for a reasonable looking Hotel and ended up riding through town. I retraced and found another road, which was "The" road to find hotels and B&Bs. Even better, I found an independent hostel, which would save me time and money. I checked in at the hostel. The check in was a takeaway. I was going to buy some food there too, but seeing the size of the small portions, decided on a hearty breakfast the next day instead. I was shown to my bed for the night, then I locked my bike undercover in their garage and went straight to my bed. I had a brief as possible chat with a young Japanese tourist who was sharing the dorm with me and touring Britain alone. I would have liked to have had a good chat with him, but I wanted to get straight to bed and make an early start tomorrow. I went straight to sleep and awoke the next morning at around 0700 and was soon on the road again, looking for a place to stop for breakfast. I stopped in a shop on the way out of Thurso, then pressed on to John O Groats to complete my 3rd Land's End to John O Groats ride. All of which have been on Grand Triangle rides.

The Hotel didn't look too promising, but there was a Costa Coffee there, which was doing breakfasts. I see the rot of commercialism has even got here, but was glad of the chance to fill my belly. I had a very leisurely breakfast, their biggest of course, and a few coffees there. Then I took a few photos with my camera and discovered that it was set on close up, so that all my photos up to here were out of focus. Someone asked me if I was just finishing, or just starting, so I had to explain that I was most of the way there but still had about 600 miles to go. Then I set off southbound down the A99 towards Wick thinking, "I'm on the home straight now."

I've never ridden this section of the End to End route in the other direction, but I reckon that the south to north route is harder. I was very glad of this. My speed was definitely down on when I started this ride and my legs were noticeably tired and very stiff after stopping. My next major obstacle was going to be the A68, but that was a few hundred miles away yet. I stopped for a dinner at Helmsdale,

which was the worst feed of the ride, but it helped me on my way. It wasn't too long before I felt peckish again, but I decided on pressing on until Inverness.

The hills subsided in the last 40 or so miles to Inverness, but I had gained a new enemy in the wind. It cost me about an hour and I was glad to arrive in Inverness. I remembered a restaurant from my ride of 1998 and went to see if it was still there. It was, so I went in. I ordered the special of the day, pork chops. I ate that, and decided on some fish and chips too, to the surprise of the waitress. The service was very slow. I forgot about that, but the food was very good and the portions were quite generous. It served as a good rest before I battled with the A9 through the night.

The climb out of Inverness didn't seem as tough as it should have been, given my tired legs and how fast a descent it is. I was rather pleased about that. I went OK along the old A9 and was making reasonable progress, still more or less level with my ride of 1998. I began feeling sleepy at around Dalwhinnie, so I stopped for a few hours rough sleep under my poncho cape.

I set off as day broke, an hour or so in front of my 1998 ride, but much less tired. I kept going to Perth where I hoped to find a café, but I didn't, so I stopped for a rest on a bench and a packet of Garibaldi's, bought in Inverness on my way north. I felt a little better and continued to Edinburgh. Somewhere near Kelty, or thereabouts, I thought I saw a cyclist wearing a 2003 PBP jersey. It was a Sunday, was it you?

Anyway, I pressed on to Edinburgh where I arrived at around midday and stopped at the Tesco's I remembered on the inner ring road. After my feed, I took off my longs and warm jersey as the day was quite warm. I now had to face the biggest barrier between me and the finish of this ride, the A68. It isn't too bad to begin with, but it gets tougher after Carter Bar. I turned my back wheel around to give me my 78" fixed and made my way to the A68, still feeling a little tired and with very tired legs. It took a few hundred meters for me to get my legs settled now and I could only do 10mph until they rode themselves in. If I sat down on the floor, I found it much easier to grab hold of a leg and pull it up, than to try and bend my knees when I tried to get up again.

The ride to Jedburgh was easy enough. I stopped at a garage for a few night time supplies before setting off for the ride ahead. I stopped in Jedburgh in 1998 and had 2 dinners before I set off into the night and only managed to haul myself over Carter Bar and down the other side, where I was pretty much finished. I was now about 5 hours in front of 1998 and was reasonably confident that I could finish before the end of tomorrow. It was still a way to go though and wasn't definite with my tired legs and lack of sleep. Jedburgh looks like a place worth visiting, especially with all the nice countryside around and the history of the place. But time was miles, so I set off up the climb of Carter Bar and crossed the border back into England, still in daylight. Now it gets hilly until I reach the turn off for Scotch Corner, about 75 miles away. After the descent of Carter Bar, it was

easy until I made the right hand turn to stay on the A68. I passed the toilets at Byrness, where I lay to rest in 1998. I've now exceeded my ride of 1998 and am not ready to give up. I made the right turn and the hills started. I started to enjoy the ride. They didn't feel as bad as I was expecting and in spite of tired legs, I was getting up the hills slowly but quite easily. I remembered struggling up these hills after the Daylight 600 in 2003 on my 83" fixed.

I also remembered the LEL of 1993. I struggled over these hills on my geared bike. It was the first time I'd come across Mr Mc Nasty.

I saw a scruffy looking cyclist at the start and was impressed that he was riding a 65" fixed on a ride so long. That was before I knew how hilly the A68 was. I saw him on his way back while I was still on my way to Edinburgh. He was well in front of most. I was very impressed and was amazed that he was going so well on his fixed wheel over all those steep hills. I never thought that I'd be able to do a thing like that. I went on to not finish that ride, where Mc Nasty was second to finish. I later discovered his name and that he was Mersey 24 champion the year I was born and he is somewhat of a living legend.

I took it steady and rather enjoyed my ride on the A68. There were a few hills that were a bit of a struggle, but I thought that I managed quite well. I had an hour or two rough sleep under my cape in Corbridge to help me stay awake for the rest of the night. It started raining, which convinced me to get going again. Next I tackled the Cartaway Heads climb, which I reckon is the toughest on that road. It got me nice and warm again.

Further on, I saw a bench at the top of a climb. I remembered that bench. I stopped there for a large pork pie when I rode my first Triangle in 1994.

I reckoned that from a fixed wheelers point of view that the A68 is tougher than the A30. But I do bear in mind that the 1600 miles or so, 300 of which were on the A30, which I'd ridden before I joined the A68, could well bias my opinion, and there isn't a great deal in it. I think the A68 hills are steeper and longer, but the A30 hills are still big and more relentless.

I began to feel drowsy again but tried to press on to Scotch Corner. I came across the turning for Scotch Corner and nearly passed it. I got my map out to see if it was the turn, and it was. I sat at the roadside for a while; probably an hour; under my cape and had a sleep. When I awoke I convinced myself to get going to Scotch Corner services where I could sleep in the warm, which is what I did.

I sat in the coffee shop and bought some expensive coffee and a very expensive sandwich, which I consumed before having some sleep. I had another coffee and some more sleep before setting off at my planned 0700. But before I set off again, I turned my back wheel around to give me my 89" fixed.

It occurred to me that Scotch Corner was the turn on the Great Eastern 1000k ride and that the other end of the ride is about level with where I live. Had I underestimated the distance? I was hoping to be home tonight, but I wouldn't manage 300

plus miles before midnight. I checked my road atlas which said I had to do 30 miles to draw level with York. I knew that the direct route home from York was 150 miles, so I had over 17 hours to ride 300k to finish the ride inside 10 days. It wasn't going to be easy with my tired legs and lack of sleep, but it was certainly possible. I also had the benefit of a strong tailwind which was very handy indeed.

It took a while for my stiff legs to be able to pedal at more than 10mph, but when they did, I was riding at around 20-25 mph down the A1. My progress was very rapid with the wind behind. There were times when I was cruising at 30 mph. I used that as an excuse for a few roadside naps to see me through my sleepy phase of the early morning.

I got over my drowsiness, which gave way to hunger. I planned on stopping in Doncaster, about 30 miles away, or about an hour and a half the way I was going.

South of Wetherby, the A1 turned into a 3 lane dual carriageway with a hard shoulder. It was great on the hard shoulder and I was making good progress. I saw a sign saying that it was turning into a motorway in a mile or so and another sign indicated non motorway traffic to take the next exit. But before I got there I was stopped by two men in a highways authority vehicle. I thought they were the police at first, in their similarly marked vehicle and wondered what was wrong.

They told me that I shouldn't be on this road and that it was a Motorway. I told them that the motorway hadn't started yet and that I had to get off at the next exit. I also told them that there was a large sign for non motorway traffic to turn off at the next exit. He was adamant that I was in the wrong and didn't know what to do. He obviously doesn't know that a green signpost means trunk road and that a blue signpost means motorway. He also obviously doesn't know the roads very well, or is just ignorant. He also told me that there is no pedestrian access to this road, it was very dangerous for me to be there and that it was the A1/M, stressing the M. There was a footpath on the other side of the crash barrier which I could see, and as for being dangerous, I felt much safer riding on the shoulder of the road than I did earlier on the main carriageway. He told me that I had to get off at the next junction which I told him I was going to do anyway because there is a sign telling me that non motorway traffic must do this. He didn't seem to be listening to me though and was having trouble believing that someone was cycling on what he thought was a motorway. I on the other hand, couldn't believe that someone who works for the highways authority was so stupid, ignorant and unaware of the roads.

But I was soon on my way again, thinking that when he told me that it was the A1/M I should have sworn and said that I thought it was the M6.

The road to Pontefract was easy going, especially with the tailwind, then it was back onto the A1, then the A638 to Doncaster where I stopped in the Tescos to buy some food to eat outside.

I made my way through Doncaster towards Bawtry. I followed the signs for the

road I wanted, which sent me over a bridge. By the time I was flying onto the bridge, at around evens, on a dual carriageway, I saw a no pedestrians and no cycling sign. Too late to turn back now, I should have been informed before I was committed to cross this bridge. I couldn't see any reason why I shouldn't cycle over it, which I did without any problems.

After Bawtry, I went to Blyth and rejoined the A1 for the last time until I turned off 7 miles later onto the A614 to go through Sherwood Forest.

Within about 30 miles I was in my home territory and riding on familiar roads. A laney route to Melton Mowbray. Before I got to Melton Mowbray, I had a brief stop for a doze and a snack. Then a B road from Melton Mowbray to Market Harborough. My legs were very tired and progress was very slow. The hills of this road seemed insignificant after last nights' assault of the A68.

It got dark as I arrived at Market Harborough. Only 30 miles to get home now, the ride is almost over. I stopped about half way between Market Harborough and Northampton to put some new batteries in my front light and had a snack. I could hardly walk and it took about a mile before my legs stopped feeling stiff. I didn't want to stop again until I got home because it took so long to get going.

Northampton came and went and I chose the B road route home, then I turned into the lanes before Newport Pagnell.

I passed my local Tescos and chose the Cycle Lane route home from there because I was going so slowly. There is a small hill on the way home from Tescos. I usually aim to ride up it at a minimum of 10mph in the saddle or 14 mph out of the saddle, and that is usually with panniers full of shopping. I rode it at 6mph out of the saddle.

I arrived home at 2330 on Bank Holiday Monday night. I'd spent 9 days and 50 minutes to ride the 2100 mile Triangle, averaging about 210 miles per day.

I'd decided that if I ever ride the Triangle again, it will be a more touristic ride. It wasn't the hardship of the ride that put me off doing it like this again; it was more to do with the traffic. If I do a ride like this again, I will probably go abroad to do it, probably France. I proved to myself that I've learned a few things in the last few years and in spite of my lesser fitness and lack of miles in my legs, I succeeded in what I failed to do in 1998. I didn't do what I was hoping to do by doing it in 8 days, but I can call it a success. After my 2000 miles in 11 days in 2004 and my PB in last year's Mersey 24, I think I have taken another step forward. My next step will be an attempt at 312 AUK championship points in the 2007 season. Whether I succeed or not remains to be seen, but that will be another story...

EPILOGUE: I had the Tuesday off work the day after the Triangle. I could hardly walk because my legs were so stiff and I spent most of the day in bed or eating. The following weekend on the Sunday I rode the Icknield 12 hour time trial. It was less than 30 miles to the start and there was a strong wind blowing me there. My legs were still very tired



Steve Abraham riding in the 2006 National 24 hour time trial

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after the Triangle, but I started reasonably well. I made the mistake of wearing too many clothes and wasn't really able to get rid of them and guarantee getting them back for my ride home.

After 40 miles, I felt my legs tiring and after 50, they were definitely tired. I began to get cramp too at around this point. The cramp got worse as I got more dehydrated. My speed dropped gradually

throughout the ride. My stomach started feeling a bit off, but wasn't troubling me. I didn't eat enough and got the knock. I stopped for a few minutes at a feed station after about 10 hours 45 minutes, and then kept riding to the end. It was my worst ever 12 hour, including when I rode this event in similar windy, but also very wet conditions as a junior in 1992.

The ride home was at a very slow

mph; luckily the strong wind had eased off a lot.

It was on the Thursday after this ride that I stopped passing blood with my stools. As for my kitchen. I think it will have to wait until Christmas 2007, unless, of course, I decide to go touring. It may never get done in my lifetime.

Those Cycling Chaps

By Bertie Phont-Whistle & Rusty
Pilkington Shears

As we approach the production of Dereks new volume, celebrating the history of our marvelous gentleman's club, it has noted in higher circles that standards of the gentleman (and indeed lady) cyclists may have lost some of their direction. In an aim to redress this situation Bertie Phont-Whistle & myself, will be producing a convenient guide to the essentials of maintaining ones decorum, whilst perambulating on your chosen steed. This handy guide can be neatly bound, slipped into ones plus fours & read in a bordello or opium den of your choice. But remember it is most definitely not available in the shops. For the first part we must tackle the important issue of what is & what is most definitely not 'de rigueur' whilst mounted upon your transport of choice. So whether it is an ordinary bicycle (or more commonly called 'penny farthing') or a modern safety bicycle, (perhaps produced at the turn of the century by those marvellous chaps in Northumberland) the theme remains constant.

Attire (or surviving in the modern world whilst maintaining ones 'raison d'etre')

One of the most important items of clothing after removing your Harris tweed & heading out for the joys of the open road, is that of the humble cycling jersey. So whether your preference is for pockets in the front or the more modern rear affair, one material rings through 'merino wool'. Yes it would appear that those chaps in the colonies have at last got something right & persuaded their sheep to produce the stuff in the correct grade, so chapeau to the New Zealand sheep worriers. Once the correct material has been selected, we then turn to practicalities, are the pockets going to be deep enough to harbour a large pouch of navy shag & a sturdy brier, without the worry of losing their contents half way up' Toms Hill'? Is it in the correct hue to

complement ones Austin Healey Sprite & is the fit sufficient to allow for a fast get away from the Fez Club without attracting too much attention?

The flexibility of this material ensures that the garment will grow with you. However with the onset of time the logo will grow with you after a fine luncheon at the aforementioned establishment order to prepare for any eventuality as far as the British weather goes the gentlemen and lady cyclist should ALWAYS wear a thick cotton Wolsey vest underneath their merino wool jersey. Moving away from the jersey, we must then turn our attention to the correct head garment. Following the UCI ruling that excluded the bowler hat & trilby from use in national time trials, following the 1969 vicars daughter incident, of which I have been informed by a club member (Brigadier Phoney Tarnborough, name changed to protect the innocent) was never proved. In a bid not to attract too much attention, the wearing of one of the more modern safety devices is preferred above the upturned colander. Unfortunately despite numerous letters Messrs Trek & Giro are yet to provide a suitable item. However upon mentioning our names in a hushed tone at Gieves & Hawkes of Saville Row, the correct item in the right Prince Of Wales check with brown leather strapping can be acquired.

And now a dilemma. Should one forego the traditional lighter weave of Harris tweed plus fours and risk ridicule in a pair of 'Lycra' shorts? Well let me ask you this. What is more likely to turn a lady's (or gentleman's if you live in certain parts of Sussex) eye. A gentlemen speeding past on his bicycle, plus fours flapping in the breeze, the fabric intertwining with his outrageously hairy legs OR the well oiled, shaven, muscular legs, thighs encased in the finest quality tight fitting lycra? An easy choice eh? And let me tell you this, well oiled shaven legs allow a gentleman to slip into a pair of size 2 black denier with ease on those nights when you

accidentally knock the channel changer thingy off of National Geographic and onto XXXBABES. Mrs Phont-Whistle is yet to become suspicious and in any case its totally normal for a chap to want to 'experiment'.

Enough of that and onto socks, throw out the National Service issue that you have kept going all these years, a nice lightweight cotton pair from Mnsr Decathlon of Dieppe will do the trick (3 pairs for 5 euros, why they changed from the familiar French Franc I am yet to wonder).

And finally footwear. The modern cyclist will require special attachments to the bottom of his shoes, that will lock his shoes into pedals made by Mr Carlos Fandango of Milan. The purpose of this is to provide merriment to ones fellow club members when having to stop quickly at junctions and falling into the gutter (a place where Brigadier Phoney Tarnborough can often be found) as you cannot get you foot out of said pedal-- oh how they will chuckle. And where to purchase such an attachment? Messrs. Loake and sons of Northampton of course! Just send them a pair of your finest brogues, and using the wonders of nails and gaffer tape, Messrs. Loake and sons will dispatch in the afternoon post a wonderful pair of cycling shoes. Oh I nearly forgot, what about cycling in inclement weather. Stay with the tried and tested here. Mrs Phont-Whistle will always follow me when I am out on a ride, her Vespa motor scooter groaning under the weight of a full set of yellow rubber 'southwesters' with matching galoshes, just in case it should rain. Let me know what you think.

Bertie

What 's On

Club Nights - every Wednesday evening 7.30pm, Harley Hall.

I am reliably informed that there will be a special meeting on 1st March, in which the intricacies of entering open Time Trials will be explained. I think we should also discuss Road Racing.

Club Runs - Our club runs depart from Harley Hall on Sundays. Meet in time for a 9am start. We have two runs. The slower run is more of a social run than the fast run, which is aimed at the road racers and others with an interest in racing. Most of the "social runs" involve a cafe stop for refuelling. Please remember this is a Club Run and is not meant to be a showcase for aggressive riding.

If you are wanting to go hard training or to show off, go on the faster run, organised by Gary Elliott, which now also leaves from the club room.

Upcoming events:

NBRC Roller Racing

Come and get your legs spinning and your heart beating this winter. Practise evenings (practise at Harley Hall outside of these nights is forbidden/ due to giving an unfair advantage)

15th Nov

22nd Nov

29th Nov

6th Dec

All starting at 7:30.

If you have not ridden rollers before please turn up to at least one practise as there will not be time to learn to balance on rollers during the race evenings (assuming a good turn out).

Race evenings

17th Jan 500k standing start limited gear

24th Jan 500k flying start limited gear

31st Jan 1k standing start limited gear

7th Feb 1k flying start limited gear

14th Feb 500k or 1k unlimited gear standing start

21st Feb 500k or 1k flying start unlimited gear

The exact format has not been decided but I have put suggested events next to each night.

Priority to NBRC members if time is short.

Thanks

Contact Chris Hartley for further information.

email: csh2@metronet.co.uk



The North Bucks Road Club

meets each Wednesday evening at Harley Hall near the junction of V10 (Brickhill Street) and H9 (Grove way), close to the Open University campus in Milton Keynes.

email: [nbrcwebsite-](mailto:nbrcwebsite-membership@yahoo.co.uk)

membership@yahoo.co.uk

web:

www.northbucksroadclub.org.uk

The North Bucks Road Club was founded in 1952. We aim to foster all areas of cycling. We have regular club runs, and many members participate in club time trials (we hold a regular series of Wednesday evening events through the season), open time trials, and road racing. Members take part in audax events, reliability trials, mountain biking and tour by bicycle.

The Club is affiliated to British Cycling, Cycling Time Trials, and several local associations, including the Northampton and District CA, the Norlond Combine, the North Middlesex and Herts CA, Womens Cycle Racing Association and Sport MK.

2006
NORTH BUCKS ROAD CLUB
Membership Application/Renewal

Membership Subscriptions (including second claim applications) for the calendar year 2006 are as follows:

	1st Claim	2nd Claim
Seniors:	£22.00	£16.00
Juniors (under 18 on 1st Jan 2006)	£ 3.00	£ 3.00
Juveniles (under 16 on 1st Jan 2006)	£ 3.00	£ 3.00
65 years and over:	£16.00	£16.00
Family	£29.00	N/A

All members wishing to renew their Subscriptions are advised that payment should be made no later than 28th February 2006. Failure to meet this requirement could seriously affect your ability to enter events under the club name.

All Payments should be addressed to the Membership Secretary : Phil Sinnett
33 Radcliffe St.
Wolverton
Milton Keynes
MK12 5DJ
Cheques to be made payable to: 'NORTH BUCKS ROAD CLUB'

Tel: 01908 317455

Mob: 07970 591945

Part A should be completed for membership renewals.

Parts A & B should be completed for new applications for membership.

PART A:

Name (Mr/Mrs/Miss) 1st claim 2nd claim

Date Of Birth

Category Senoir/Junior/Juvenile/65 plus/Family

Address E-mail

Telephone Post Code

Date

PART B:

I wish to apply for membership of the North Bucks Road Club (appropriate fee enclosed).
I understand that my application is subject to the approval of the committee, and that should I be successful in my application I agree to the following:

- 1 To abide by the rules and regulations of the North Bucks Road Club.
- 2 To provide assistance at Club events at the discretion of the organiser of that event.

Signature

Proposer (Club Member)

Seconded (Club Member)