



1530 on 8 June 2006 - St David's Cathedral
Steve and Rob

Rob, Steve & Martin's Side-to-Side *June 2006*

**A bicycle ride of 420 miles from
St David's, Pembrokeshire to Lowestoft, Suffolk**



1230 on 15 June 2006 - Lowestoft
Steve, Martin and Rob

The Side-to-Side June 2005 : St David's to Lowestoft



Rob



Steve



Martin

The Riders

Rob from Stratford-upon-Avon and Steve from Honeybourne for the whole ride - with Martin from Knowle for the Stratford-upon-Avon to Lowestoft segment ¹

How it all started

In 2002 Rob rode the Sustrans Coast-to-Coast (C2C) route (140 miles) and got the taste for cycle touring adventures in 2003 The Trans-Pennine Trail (220 miles) from Southport to Hornsea with Steve and John in 2004 The Pennine Cycleway from Derby to Berwick-upon-Tweed (355 miles) with Steve and Peter in 2005 The End-to-End (E2E) 935 miles from John O'Groats to Land's End (The JOGLE) ² with Joe (Steve joined the ride for a 100 or so miles over a couple of days)

Seeking a new challenge (or *Boys' Outing*) for 2006 several options were considered and the Side-to-Side was finally selected. To ride between St David's in Pembrokeshire and Lowestoft in Suffolk - from the westernmost point in Wales to the easternmost point in England, 420 miles.

Steve, having been unable to ride the whole of the E2E was keen to ride and Rob's brother-in-law, Martin, expressed an interest.

Rob and Steve are long-time cyclists; Martin's previous experience of cycling was limited to a "fully supported" family cycling holiday in France in 2002 ³ - but borrowing one of Rob's bikes he put in some serious training in and around the lanes of Warwickshire.

Maps and various CTC publications were consulted, and yet more felt pen lines made on the long-suffering road atlas.

It was decided to ride from west to east in order to make more time-efficient use of the necessary train journeys getting to and from the start and finish - and riding across the map rather than up or down implied that it would be flat!

And the real reason . . . the quest for the perfect lamb shank *read on*

The S2S Journal

This journal is an attempt at a record of the journey - without Joe with his wit, nature notes, ability to find wild animals, gadgets and inter-galactic transmission equipment it is but a bland and brief summary when compared with the JOGLE ⁴ of 2005

Of necessity a few footnotes have been inserted to explain some points.

The map profiles, because of the way they are created, vary in scale relative to each other but do give a representation of the ups and downs encountered each day.

1. Any similarities with Jerome K Jerome's book, *Three Men on the Bummell*, are purely coincidental

2. JOGLE = John O'Groats to Land's End

3. The peloton consisted of Rob, his wife Philippa, Martin, his wife Marjorie and their daughter Lucy - 8 splendid days cycling around the chateaux of the Loire.

4. *Rob & Joe's JOGLE* is a report of the 2005 journey - available at www.beewee.co.uk This worthy tome, although yet to enter the Amazon best-seller lists, has become an established source of reference with a number of End-to-Enders. A CD version with the maps is available in return for a modest financial contribution to the MacRide charity cycle event (www.macride.org.uk)

The Route



The route towns, with overnight stops in **bold** :

St David's Cathedral

Berea
Croes-Gôch
Mathry
Manorowen
Fishguard
Newport
Crymych
Eglwysrwr
Boncath
Newcastle
Emlyn
Pentrecagal
Pencader
Llidiad-Nenog
Llansawel
Porthyrhyd
Cilycwm
Llandovery
Cyngordy
Tirabad

Llangammarch
Wells
Llanddewir Cwm
Builth Wells
Llanfared
Llandilo Graban
Boughrood
Glasbury
Hay-on-Wye
Westbrook
Dorstone
Peterchurch
Kingsstone
Cleghonger
Hereford
Lower
Bullingham
Holme Lacy
Mordiford
Woolhope
Putley
Aylton
Little Marcle

Ledbury
Eastnor
Hollybush
Castlemorton
Upton Upon
Severn
Ryall
Naunton
Strensham
Pershore
Wick
Hampton
Evesham
Badsey
Honeybourne
Pebworth
Long Marston
The Greenway
Stratford-upon-Avon
Wellesbourne
Ashorne
Bishops

Itchington
Southam
Napton
Priors Marston
Hellidon
Staverton
Daventry
Norton
Great Brington
East Haddon
Harlestone
Chapel
Boughton
Moulton
Sywell
Wellingborough
Higham Ferrers
Hargrave
Kimbolton
Stonely
West Perry
Offord Cluny

Offord D'Arcy
Graveley
Hilton
Fenstanton
Swavesey
Over
Willingham
Earith
Sutton
Witchford
Ely
Queen Adelaide
Prickwillow
Lakenheath
Brandon
Thetford
Brettenham
Garboldisham
North Lopham
South Lopham
Bressingham
Diss
Burston

Dickleburgh
Rushall
Harleston
Redenhall
Wortwell
Earsham
Bungay
Beccles
Worlingham

Lowestoft

Primary objectives were to minimise hills and main roads - the route was selected and divided into realistic days so that we could book accommodation etc. The line of the route passed our homes so one night was spent with our long-suffering spouses.

Maps

In order to make the trip as simple as possible we produced a "Road Book" that consisted of 65 A5-sized pages with an extract of the LandRanger 1:50 000 Ordnance Survey map (printed at about 70% of the actual scale)

In addition we printed street plans to locate accommodation and one or two of the trickier routes where we traversed larger towns.

The map enabled us to follow quiet roads for the most part and only once or twice did we resort to the use of a compass to establish directions. Apart from an error in navigation in the wilds of Wales that caused us to ascend and then descend about 2.5 miles of a very steep hill and a minor inconsequential diversion in Suffolk the selected route worked.

A few unpleasant stretches on main roads were unavoidable but they were traversed as quickly as possible.



Example page from the Route Book. The Memory Map CD product was acquired with maps created in Word and the route annotations applied with a graphic pen and tablet.

The Accommodation ⁵

As with the previous adventures, all of the overnight stops were booked in advance to ensure that we would have somewhere decent to stay and not spend time and effort hunting for a place each day - we used Bed & Breakfasts and small hotels - all sourced via the Internet, together with one night at our respective homes at, roughly, the half-way point.

Of the six nights one was poor, one was adequate, two were very good, and two were outstanding (and historic, really)

Special mention must be made of the stops at Llandovery and Harleston where the B&Bs were in exceptional barn conversion properties, and in both cases hosted by charming couples.

The route, although going through many villages and small towns, did not have many obvious pubs with accommodation or B&Bs, again vindicating our decision to book ahead.

The Train Journeys

The simplest and most economical way to get to St David's was to go by train from Honeybourne (near Evesham, a little to the west of Stratford-upon-Avon) via Great Malvern and Hereford to Haverfordwest. The insanity of the national rail pricing systems made it necessary to buy 3 separate tickets for the journey, reducing the cost against one complete journey ticket by about a third.

The local bus service transported us, with our bikes, to St David's and the starting point of our ride.

The return journey from Lowestoft, with changes at Norwich and Peterborough would get us all to Birmingham whence Rob and Steve took the train to Stratford-upon-Avon and Martin to Dorridge.

To our immense relief after the trauma of 2005's JOGLE, all of the transport arrangements worked perfectly and to time.

The one concern we had with bike reservations from Norwich to Birmingham came to nothing with no question about the third bike for which we did not have a reservation ⁶

⁵ See Stats pages for details

⁶ Central Trains only permits 2 cycle reservations per train. Our contingency plan was to send ahead to the last B&B a sheet of black material and a roll of tape with which we would have packaged Steve's bike (being the smallest) and taken it on the train as "luggage" and avoided the restriction. Madness!



Rob sets off from home at 0730

A quick 10 miles for Rob from Stratford-upon-Avon and about 400 yards for Steve to ride to Honeybourne Station (near Evesham in Worcestershire)

A tortuous journey involving 3 trains, a bus and about 6 hours saw our arrival at St David's - the smallest city in the UK and the start of our adventure.

After a quick photo-call at the spectacular cathedral it was off on an undulating 17 mile ride to Fishguard and the first overnight stop.

Dinner was at a superb restaurant in Fishguard, notching up lamb shank number one of the trip, and several pints of Brains beer.

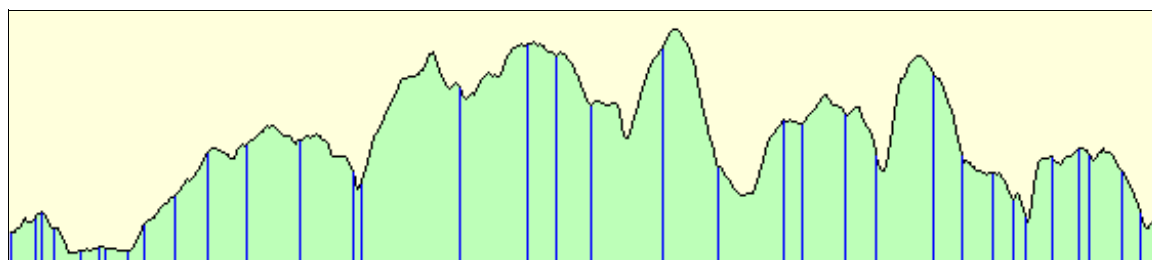
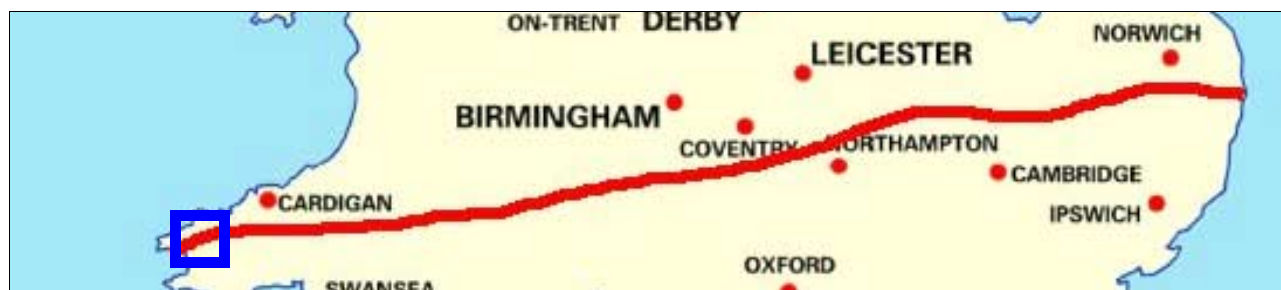


Honeybourne Station. (that's it - there's nothing else to photograph!) There should be tumbleweed blowing across the track.

Daily Statistics

Distance Today	17 miles
Total Distance	17 miles
Distance to Go	403 miles
Weather	Very warm

Daily Route & Profile





Fishguard, looking back towards Lower Town

France exploits of Joseba Beloki and Lance Armstrong (where Armstrong took a short-cut through a corn-field and Beloki got a lift to hospital in the helicopter after skidding on melted tar on a bend)

The night's accommodation was excellent, only marred by an indifferent meal at a pub in Llandovery (no lamb shanks)

The very hot weather dictated an early start to get some miles under the wheels before it got really hot - although we were soon pretty warm having only descended and then ascended two pairs of very steep hills in and out of Fishguard's Lower Town.

A day of climbs and fast descents in very high temperatures, requiring a high intake of fluids.

Our rewards for the day were some spectacular scenery on high moor-land, together with miles of pine woods ... and for the most part very few cars.

In the heat of the afternoon we had several instances where the road surfaces were melting, making it especially tricky on fast downhill bends as we struggled to avoid replicating the hair-raising 2003 Tour de

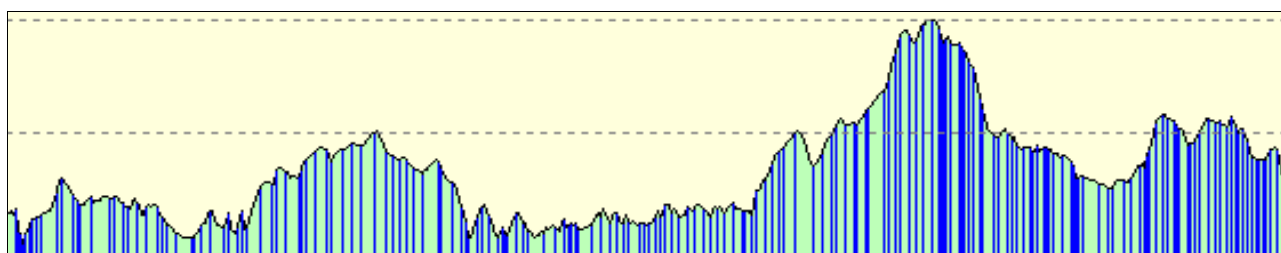
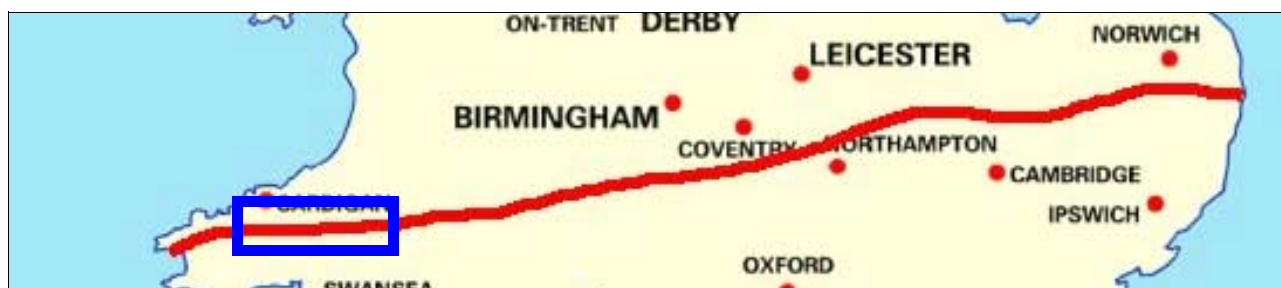


Henllys Estate Bed & Breakfast about 1.5 miles from Llandovery

Daily Statistics

Distance Today	65 miles
Total Distance	82 miles
Distance to Go	338 miles
Weather	Very hot >33°

Daily Route & Profile



Still very hot so an early start through rolling countryside with easier climbs and stunning views of a railway viaduct.

A coffee stop at the British Legion in Builth Wells where an enterprising gentlemen seeing two rather hot cyclists suggested that his fund-raising coffee morning was just the thing for us! A coffee, a tea, two Welsh cakes (each) and two jam tarts (each) for a total of £2 seemed a bargain - and we were the youngest people there by a good 20 years.

A brief stop for some shandy, leaving the pub before the football (England 1 - 0 Paraguay) started and on through Hay-on-Wye to Hereford on traffic-less roads.

Normally cyclists detest headwinds - today was the exception as it cooled the air just a



Builth Wells and the bridge over the Wye

little - but not enough to make eating a fast-melting ice lollipop very tricky.

The hotel was a disappointment, being located on a very noisy road opposite some car showrooms and a large factory - however the nearby pub did serve an excellent lamb shank.

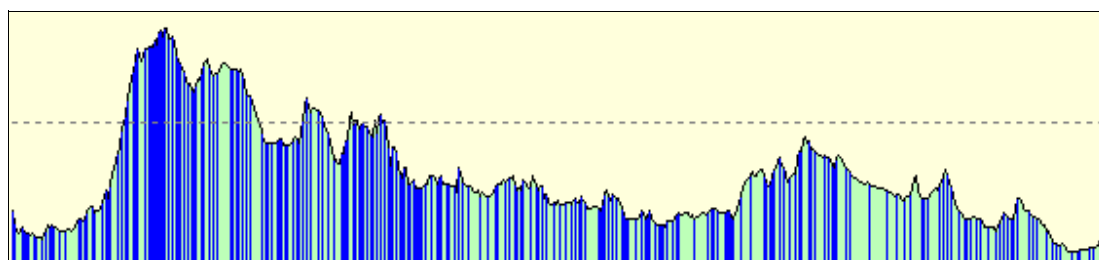


The symbol of Hay-on-Wye - books and more books.

Daily Statistics

Distance Today	68 miles
Total Distance	150 miles
Distance to Go	270 miles
Weather	Very hot >32°

Daily Route & Profile



Today would see the half-way point and overnight stops at our homes - as well as much easier riding for most of the day.

Another early start and a few short sharp climbs, with some speedy descents got us to Ledbury where for about 100 metres we shared the route of the JOGLE from 2005 - then leaving the Marches to descend to the Severn Vale for a coffee stop at Upton-on-Severn.

In order to avoid the only, rather fast and twisty, road from Upton the route took us on some very small lanes, through a water treatment works, over a sluice gate and through about 200 metres of "jungle" on an island in the River Severn before clambering over the lock gates with our bikes to reach the lanes again and onwards towards Evesham.

Speed picked up as we were into flat, and familiar country - just a pause at Elmley Castle for an intake of shandy and we were as good as home.

Steve leaving the route to go home to Honeybourne and Rob via Mickleton (and two ice lollipops) to Stratford - arriving about 1430 in time for a late lunch.

A quick check-over of the bike, a change of kit and luggage and ready for the second (and final!) half of the journey.

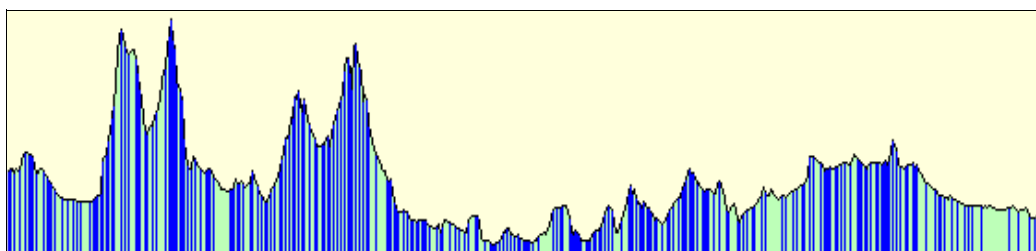


A rather hot Rob arrives at home at the half-way stage

Daily Statistics

Distance Today	65 miles
Total Distance	215 miles
Distance to Go	205 miles
Weather	Very warm c 30°

Daily Route & Profile





Ready for the off : L-R - Martin, Rob, Steve

Early morning thunderstorms looked as if they might dampen the day - but other than Steve delaying⁶ his ride to Stratford by half an hour to avoid the lightning (to no avail as it started again and he still got soaked, but managed to avoid being struck by lightning) The peloton set off in the dry - now with Martin.

Gently rolling countryside via a coffee stop at Southam and, in increasing heat, through Daventry to lunch at a garden centre sandwiched between the main railway line and the M1 motorway. Surprisingly there were few country pubs - and the one or two we did pass were closed at lunch-times on Mondays.

Althorp was the next major landmark as we rode around the estate, through some very smart villages to the north of Northampton before passing the airfield and aviation museum at Sywell on the run into Wellingborough for the overnight stop.

After parking the bikes in the "function suite" Martin rushed to his room to watch the football whilst Steve and Rob took the longer view and had some beers⁷

Mention must be made of the hotel which was stuck in a 1960s/1970s time-war. It is best described as a "commercial hotel" catering for travelling salesmen, skilled manual workers away from home ... and cyclists. An indication of the style can be gleaned from the menu which include Prawn Cocktail (with Mary (*sic*) Rose sauce), various steaks and liqueur floater coffees! We didn't look but the wine list undoubtedly featured Blue Nun.

Make no mistake, the place was fine for our purpose - and even better, the menu prices seemed to be at 1970s levels.

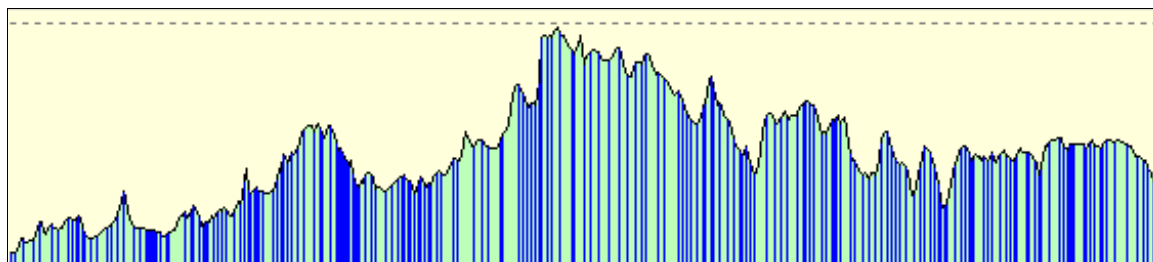
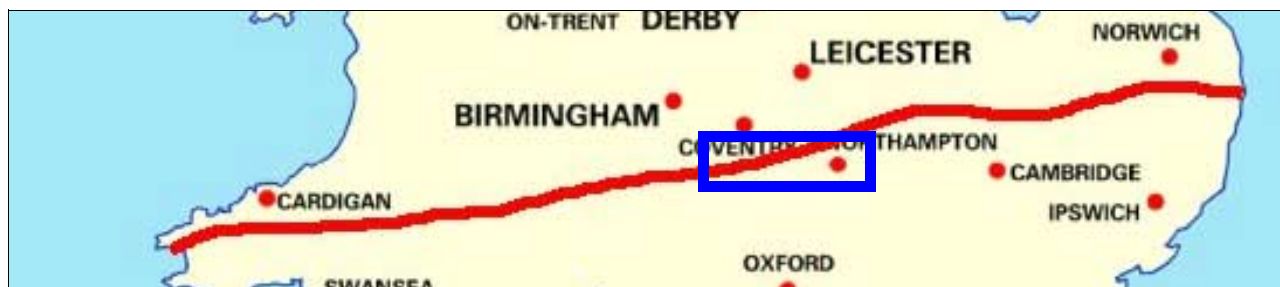
6 Steve sent a text to advise of the delay - this was the ONLY text or rider-to-rider telephone call of the whole journey!

7 The World Cup was held during the ride (It sounds better that way round - rather than the ride was while the World Cup was on. Gets the importance in perspective!)

Daily Statistics

Distance Today	60 miles
Total Distance	275 miles
Distance to Go	145 miles
Weather	Thunderstorms, overcast, then hot

Daily Route & Profile



Not as hot today which, with the flatter terrain, made riding much easier.

After some pretty hairy traffic leaving Wellingborough and crossing major trunk roads near Higham Ferrers it was out into quiet country lanes towards the village of Kimbolton.

Five miles on and we reached Graffham Water where we were reliably informed by a group of (very fast) cyclists there was a café beside the reservoir - so we made a 1.5 mile diversion and there was a cafe, but it was closed.

A few miles further on the route crossed the main A1 trunk road at a very, very busy roundabout - it wasn't until we were in the village on the other side that we noticed the underpass for cyclists and pedestrians!

Coffee, with date and walnut cake, was at a splendid coaching inn at Buckden - sitting outside in the sunshine that had now taken over from the rather dull start.

Eastwards through attractive villages to cross the A14 and, via a shandy stop, to the village of Over where we called on a cousin of Steve's who provided us with lunch (thanks Joy & Paul) before continuing to the overnight stop at Ely ... and another lamb shank at the pub by the river.



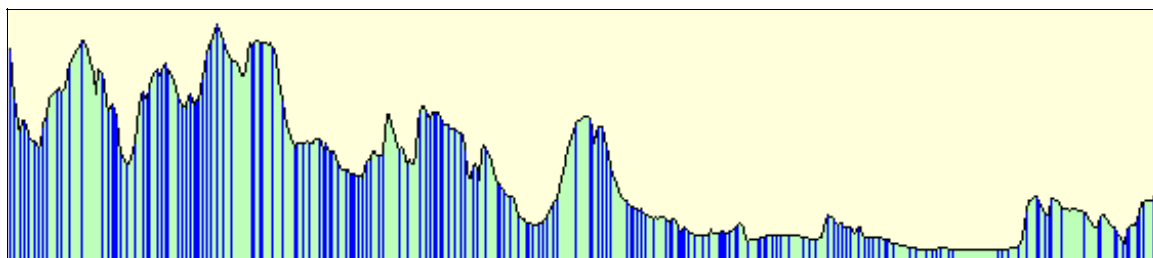
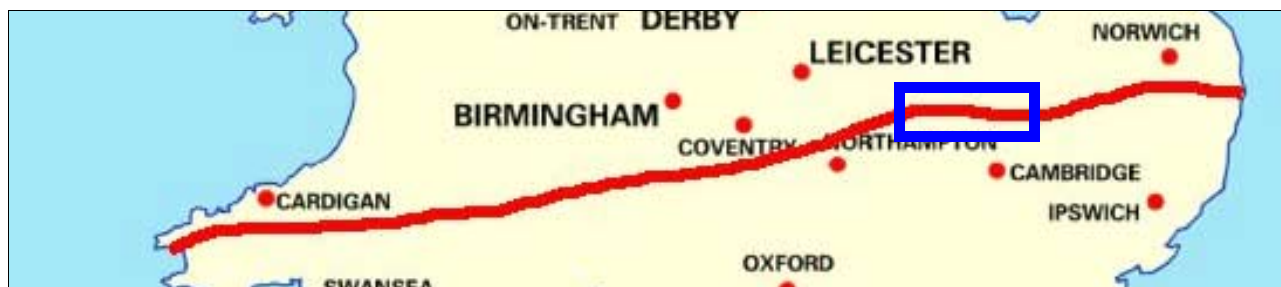
*Ely Cathedral, appearing like a ship in the flat fenland
Ready to leave Steve's cousin's house (Martin seemed to want to go the other direction)*



Daily Statistics

Distance Today	61 miles
Total Distance	336 miles
Distance to Go	84 miles
Weather	Overcast, warmer later on with a very brief rain shower

Daily Route & Profile



Riding across the fens you can see why the area produces the top stock car drivers - they all drive old cars like lunatics!

Having said that, our route took us almost exclusively on secondary roads towards Lakenheath and then Brandon where a short stretch on a main road to Thetford was unavoidable.

The latter part of the morning and the afternoon was all on very quiet roads with scarcely a car, through wooded avenues and agricultural areas - interspersed with tiny villages and the small town of Diss.

Special mention must be made of what was the outstanding overnight stop on the whole trip - the B&B at Bateman's Barn, Elmham Hall, near Harleston in Suffolk.

The farm, still working, had a Grade 1 listed farmhouse (with the B&B rooms) and a medieval barn used as a conference centre, wedding venue, tearoom - and where we had breakfast the following morning.

The whole complex had been restored and developed with painstaking attention to detail and authenticity.

Hosts John and Nicole clearly loved what they were doing and made us feel really welcome.



Bateman's Barn at Elmham Hall, near Harleston

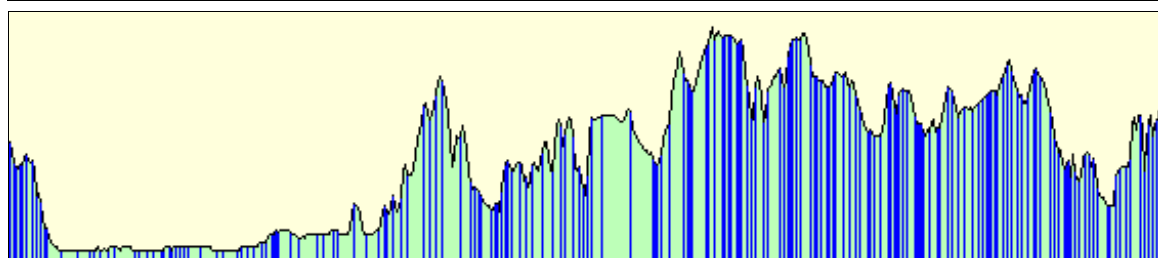
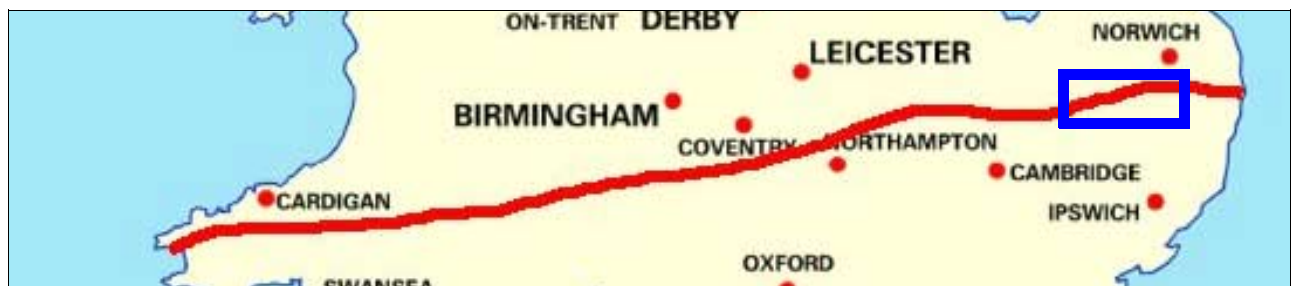
*The B&B's Bridal Suite complete with half-tester bed
(Rob had this room, at Nicole's insistence)*



Daily Statistics

Distance Today	62 miles
Total Distance	398 miles
Distance to Go	22 miles
Weather	Sunny, warm

Daily Route & Profile





Today being a short day with just 20 or so miles to do by lunchtime called for a later than usual leisurely breakfast.

Barely 3 or 4 miles into the ride as we reached the village of Flixton we came across what seemed like a pub with lots of old aircraft in the garden - it turned out to be The Norfolk & Suffolk Aviation Museum.

Half an hour later and we had barely scratched the surface looking at the thousands of exhibits displayed in numerous hangars and portable buildings, as well as outside.

Onwards via Bungay and Beccles (and a bit more busy main road) to the end of the journey at Lowestoft - the actual easternmost point was

Aerial view (which we didn't take!) of the aircraft museum with the pub and the road in the left foreground

reached through an industrial estate and gas works - very depressing.

The *Boys' Outing* rides always finish with a beer and then a fish and chip lunch. This ride produced a real result - a traditional fish and chip shop that was attached to its own pub!

The adventure completed, all that remained was a 6 hour train ride home (and a lie down!)

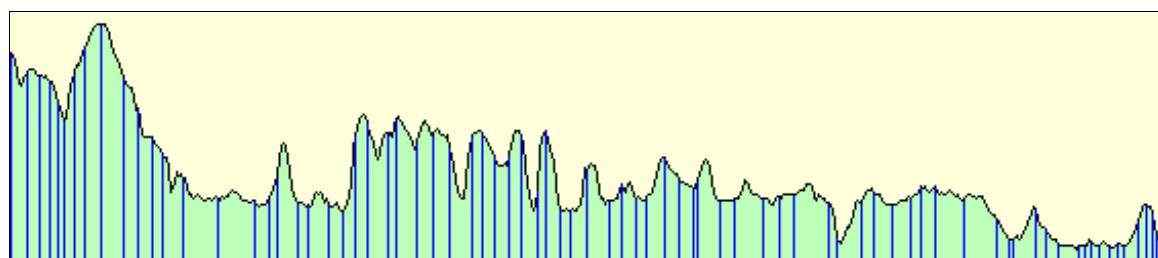
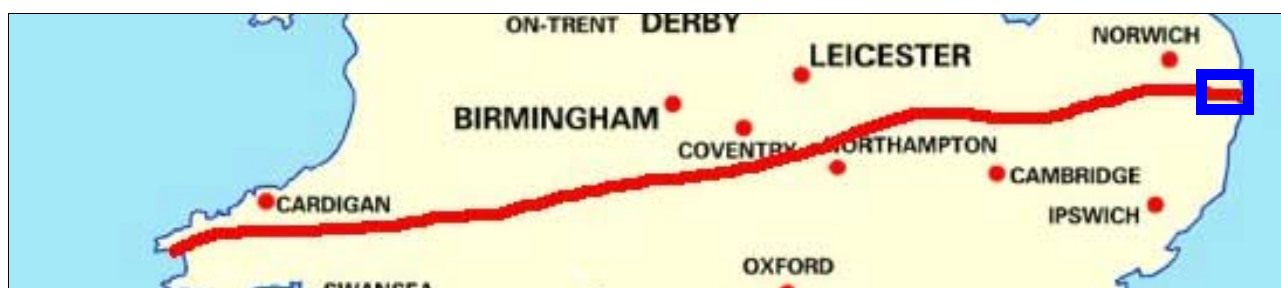
Lowestoft Ness and journey's end. Steve, Martin & Rob



Daily Statistics

Distance Today	22 miles
Total Distance	420 miles
Distance to Go	0 miles
Weather	Overcast, then warm and sunny

Daily Route & Profile



... few statistics and some odd bits of information

In the tradition of the JOGLE report here are just a few statistics and facts about the ride :

The Bikes	Rob	Dawes Galaxy Tourer, vintage 1975. Rebuilt in 2005 and modified for 2006 with new, wider handlebars and more effective dual-pivot brakes
	Steve	Giant XT2, 2003, front suspension mountain bike fitted with slick tyres for road use
	Martin	Saracen Highlander, 1995, hybrid fitted with slick tyres
Punctures		Nil
Max speed	Rob	38.8 mph
	Steve	About the same
	Martin	Not as fast, he wasn't there for the hills
Food	<i>(consumed by Rob)</i>	
	Malt loaves	4.5
	Poached eggs	9
	Lamb shanks	3 (see below)
Beer	<i>(consumed by all)</i>	
Top Tip of the journey		Let's just say considerable
		Steve stored Mars bars in a filled water bottle that acted as a refrigerator, with drinking water in his Camelbak.
Champagne Moment(s) of the journey		Longer than a moment : the stay at Elmham Hall, with the west Wales scenery a close second.
		Martin's highlight was when another passenger showed him mobile phone downloads of the England goals from the match played while we were on the train.

The trains

Honeybourne - Haverfordwest

Station	Timetable
HONEYBOURNE	dep 08:52
GREAT MALVERN	arr 09:40
GREAT MALVERN	dep 09:53
HEREFORD	arr 10:23
HEREFORD	dep 10:49
HAVERFORDWEST	arr 14:28

Duration: 5:36

Bus to St David's

Lowestoft - Stratford-upon-Avon

Station	Timetable
LOWESTOFT	dep 14:50
NORWICH	arr 15:24
NORWICH	dep 15:52
PETERBOROUGH	arr 17:26
PETERBOROUGH	dep 17:54
BIRMINGHAM NEW STREET	arr 19:45
<i>Rob & Steve</i>	
BIRMINGHAM MOOR STREET	dep 20:30
STRATFORD-UPON-AVON	arr 21:21
<i>Martin</i>	
BIRMINGHAM MOOR STREET	dep 20:08
DORRIDGE	arr 20:32

.... and the lamb shanks !

Since our epic traverse of the Pennine Cycleway in 2004 (from Derby to Berwick-on-Tweed) lamb shank has been the dish of choice for dinner each evening for these rides.

Despite concerted efforts to each achieve consumption of all four corners of the lamb we again failed in our mission - managing only three, all of which were excellent, at Fishguard, Hereford and Ely.

Clearly, future ride planning must have more focus on culinary matters of a sheepish nature.



The Accommodation

Fishguard

Tara Hotel
11 Windy Hall
Fishguard SA65 9DP
Tel: 01348 872777
e-mail: info@tara-hotel.co.uk
web: www.tara-hotel.co.uk

"Homely" probably best describes this 8 room hotel, run by a couple from Brum who were very new to this sort of business

Recommended



Llandovery

Henllys Farm Estate
Llandovery
SA20 0EW
Telephone: 01550 721332
e-mail: mcgill@henllys93.fsnet.co.uk
web: www.henllysestate.co.uk

An outstanding conversion of a farmhouse and barns to form 5 B&B rooms and a superb breakfast room. The owners, Sarah & James, could not have been more helpful and charming.

Very highly recommended



Hereford

Hopbine Hotel
Roman Road
Hereford, HR1 1LE
Telephone: 01432 268722

Adequate and clean, but certainly well short of the impression given by the website. The owner was helpful, letting Steve use tools etc for some minor repairs to his bike.

OK, but try & find somewhere else



The fourth night was spent at our respective homes

Wellingborough

Columbia Hotel
19-31 Northampton Road, Wellingborough, NN8 3HG
Tel: 01933 229333
e-mail: enquiries@columbia-hotel.co.uk
web: www.columbia-hotel.co.uk

A typical "commercial hotel" in the middle of the town - stuck in a 1960/70s time warp (Prawn cocktail and steak - probably Blue Nun too!) Charming and helpful owners

Recommended



Ely

Sycamore House
91 Cambridge Road
Ely CB7 4HX
Tel: 01353 662139
e-mail: info@sycamoreguesthouse.co.uk
web: www.sycamoreguesthouse.co.uk

A large (c 1930s) house with some outbuildings - Steve had the Potting Shed and Martin the Coach House. Excellently appointed, with charming and helpful owners.

Highly recommended



Harleston

South Elmham Hall
St Cross South Elmham
near Harleston IP20 0PZ
Tel: 01986 782526
e-mail: john@southelmham.co.uk
web: www.southelmham.co.uk

Part of a farm diversification project with an outstanding barn and B&B rooms. John & Nicole went out of their way to welcome us, even with a lift to the pub and back for dinner

Very highly recommended



The overnight stops have been awarded a "lamb shank rating" (maximum is 4 - although 5 may be possible near a nuclear power station!) This is a first, and we expect it to be adopted for future rides - it is based on the quality of accommodation, not on the availability of lamb shanks.

After word from Rob



"Was it fun ?" "Yes"

Like most of the days on the previous rides we had good weather (almost too good for the first three days) and it was again fascinating to see the changes in countryside, agriculture, architecture and industry during the journey.

From the rolling hills, cliffs and sea-views in west Wales - through some very hilly areas to cross the Marches into the Severn & Evesham vales - then more rolling Warwickshire and Northamptonshire countryside before the bleak fenlands with their almost black soil and endless market garden produce fields merging into the prairies of East Anglia - and finally reaching the rather grimy port of Lowestoft. All unrolling in front of the handlebars of the bike over hundreds of miles.

I suppose I have to ask myself the same questions as I did after the JOGLE in 2005 :

How tough was it? - some steep hills in Wales but nothing really daunting - the first two full days with temperatures in excess of 30°C were debilitating - although a strong headwind did take a bit of the heat away.

What would I have done differently? Not a lot.

As usual I travelled with minimalist luggage (with the benefit of a stop at home half way through for a kit change) BUT I failed to take a spare pair of shoes AGAIN and, as before, "clopped around like Dobbin" in my cycling shoes in the evenings - next time I WILL take a spare pair!

What was different for this adventure? Very little, the overall distance was shorter but the daily distances were about the same. I used the same bike, but with more comfortable wider handlebars and upgraded brakes to improved the stopping power. Other than that, the bike and equipment was as used for the JOGLE in 2005, even the same air in the tyres!

.oOo.

As always, I got a lot of enjoyment from the planning - finding routes, creating the Road Book, finding and booking accommodation, booking the train journeys etc.

It was great to ride the whole journey with Steve after our previous trips and it was a real experience for Martin on his first *Boys' Outing* - he trained hard and did very well. The one thing that we could rely on was if Steve or I said "*How far have we done so far?*" - Martin would give us, from his bike computer, the miles to the 4th decimal point - AND how far we still had to go that day!

We missed Joe with his Liz Hurley fantasies, wit and countless text messages - this journal is but a poor imitation of the JOGLE report, but I hope you have enjoyed it, dear reader.

What's the next adventure? I STILL fancy cycling to the South of France, via Eurotunnel (yes, you can do it with a bike) to Calais, to Reims and then almost due South to Avignon, before turning right to finish at Montpellier. (*I now have all the maps . . . watch this space for 2007!*)

Rob

Stratford-upon-Avon, June 2006

Special mention must be made of our spouses (Philippa, Nina & Marjorie) who not only granted us leave passes for the trip, but actively encouraged us too.