

## **Lands End to John O'Groats - a bike ride in ten days**

*5 - 14 June 2009*

Planning had started back in September 2008 and had consisted of reading reports on the internet and following the routes on a map. Notes were made of places to avoid, bad sections of road etc and gradually a route was formulated. Each route is entirely a personal thing; you start at one end and ride to the other. I had decided to ride south to north to make use of the prevailing winds Unfortunately nature in its infinite wisdom turned the winds around and I had north easterly winds all the way. The original route plan had shown the distance to be 876 miles, this proved to be somewhat shorter than the final total of 942. This was despite a route change only days before departure, to shorten it slightly, by missing out Dumfries and Kilmarnock and taking the NCN 7 (National Cycle Network 7) from Gretna to Loch Lomond.

Support and encouragement was given at home by Denise my Wife, our two daughters Rachel and Sarah other members of the family and friends, at work and in the Derbyshire Caving Club. That support was invaluable, and I thank everyone whole heartedly. Accommodation was to be a mixture of Youth Hostels, Bunk houses, Bed and Breakfast, Friends, Relatives and Home. Support en-route was given by Rachel, at the end of each day she became quite adept at taking the wheels off the bike to get it into the car while I was trying to find dry clothes.

I had decided to make the trip into a charitable event and had chosen to support Christies the Cancer hospital in Manchester and The Derbyshire Cave Rescue Organisation. Two web pages were set up on the "Just giving" website to collect funds and benefit from the gift aid scheme. I approached the chairman of the company I work for, for sponsorship and he made a most generous donation to the charities, but I had to complete the ride, it was now a challenge, I now had something else to spur me on. Further encouragement came when I found out that he had completed the ride not once but twice!

Shortly before the departure date I posted a thread on the Cyclist Touring Club website forum, from that I received an offer of an escort from Camelford to Okehampton from "Mick F" in Cornwall. A second escort came from Martin in Bristol who was staying at my overnight stop in Bristol. He very kindly guided me through Bristol out to the Seven Bridge. Our chairman had contacted a friend of his, Peter Ward who lives near Preston, Peter a keen club cyclist, took me through Chorley, Preston, and Lancaster up to Kendal. All three of my guides are "End to Enders". I thank them for their time and company, all of them had excellent knowledge of their own area and it made the rides most enjoyable.

**Arrival at Lands End. The day before the start.**



Accommodation was in Lands End Youth Hostel at Kelyknack.

After the 350 mile drive from home we found the hostel, had something to eat and had a look for the “Merry Maidens” at Boskenna, an ancient stone circle.



A nice way to relax and prepare for the journey ahead! Back to the hostel and get ready.

### **Day one Lands End to Okehampton**

Signing the book in the Lands End Hotel



The start line, Rachel was videoing the start I set off only to return before getting out of the gates I'd not put the Speedo on he bike! So I had another go and set off for real this time.



The time almost 0900 I checked my watch as I passed through the entrance and it was 0900 an on time departure.

On the way out of Lands end I'd not gone more than a mile when I spotted another cyclist heading towards me laden with rear panniers. He looked over and shouted "Where are you going?" I replied "John O'Groats" He said "I've just come from there" "well done" I said, He wished me luck, we exchanged our thanks and goodbyes and continued our journeys. The day had started out cold and windy but brightened up as I travelled east towards Penzance, and my first rendezvous with Rachel at Hayle. The next few days were to be a learning curve for us, how far to ride before meeting up? We had decided to make it about every hour. This was to prove costly in time as later we altered it to 30 miles or 3 hours and progress was improved.

It wasn't before long that I suffered my first puncture. I think it was just before Indian Queens on the A30. I'd got a spare tube so I made a quick change and I was soon back on the road. At Indian Queens I turned off the A30 towards Wadebridge on the A39 only to find the traffic slowing due to an event at the Royal Cornwall Showground. I'd had a message of Mick to say he was in Camelford and waiting, I was now a bit behind, but pushing on. I got diverted away from Wadebridge town centre due to show traffic but took a picture of the town from the bypass



I'd spoken to Rachel and asked her to look out for Mick in Camelford, I'd told her to look for a cyclist on a red Mercian bike, its Mick's pride and joy. He was waiting in the town centre as she walked down. Mick knew Rachel was around and they spotted one another. I arrived shortly after and saw them as Mick looked up he saw me and we both waved to one another as I rode down into the town.



Onward, and with Mick's expert guidance we covered the next few miles to Okehampton down the A39 to Davidstow turning onto the A395 where after a short while we turned off for Egloskerry and a great ride down to Launceston over the A30 and on towards Okehampton. I'd got rooms booked at "Betty Cottles" just outside Okehampton Mick asked if I wanted to finish with a country lane or a flourish, Oh lets go with a flourish! So back up onto the A30 down hill onto the next slip road and off as we flew off the slip road Mick looked back and shouted "38" referring to the speed, I'd checked mine and replied "Spot on 38" within minutes we were at Betty Cottles, great company and a great ride. The weather was turning to rain and Mick had a way to go to get home. I thanked him for his time, company and guidance, his local knowledge was superb



Tired and wet but a good first day!

Rachel had spotted some fibres coming out of the rear tyre, I decided to keep an eye on them for the next few days. And see if they got any worse

**Total mileage 106.57**  
**Total time 7h 35m 42 sec**  
**Average speed 14 mph**  
**Max speed 39.7**



## Day two Okehampton to Bristol

The second day started cold and wet, and stayed that way for most of the day, still had the head winds. I crossed over the Dartmoor Railway on the B3215.



Looking east towards Sampford Courtenay Station

Later on while on the A3072 heading towards Tiverton parked on the verge was a traveller and his caravan, I asked him if I could take his picture, He replied "I don't see why not every other bugger does" I thanked him and told him it was for my Lands End to John O'Groats record "Oh not an other one!"



After leaving Tiverton on the A361 I crossed the Grand Western Canal at Boehill Bridge just before junction 27 on the M5



After junction 27 I stayed on the A38 through Taunton and on towards Bridgwater, Next was Bristol staying with the A38 I passed Bristol Airport



Time was now getting late and our stop for the night was in Bristol at a friend's house. On the way down to meet Rachel I could see the outskirts of Bristol



Rachel found a car park a few miles down the road just past the village of Barrow Gurney. So we met there and loaded the bike into the car and set off for Bristol. We found Fiona's flat and met Martin who was staying there. Martin was to become invaluable at guiding me across Bristol on Sunday Morning. Fiona and Andy her partner were out racing in the Bristol Bike fest and arrived home later on. Andy had made two huge dishes lasagne which we all enjoyed. Both Fiona and Andy were racing again on Sunday so we all had an early night. Martin had volunteered to meet me at the end of the village of Long Ashton and take me through Bristol to The Severn Bridge

**Total distance 95.49**  
**Total time 6h 47m 46 sec**  
**Average speed 14.00 mph**  
**Max 33.00**

### **Day three, Bristol to All Stretton.**

Early breakfast up and out, we wished Fiona and Andy good luck with the races and set off for the car park where I finished yesterday. Rachel had instructions where to meet Martin and myself. I left Rachel tidying the car up a bit and set off to find Martin as I came out of Long Ashton there he was. Off we went through the park where the bike fest was being held out towards the Clifton Suspension Bridge.



Above Martin, below me, just before we crossed the Clifton Suspension Bridge



Martin was a super guide as we nipped in and out of side roads, main roads up here down there, I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was quite a way through Bristol and out to the other side, we got to the service area where we had arranged to meet Rachel. I thanked him and we made our good byes. I set off for the cycle track over the bridge and Rachel set off for Tintern Abbey. We had arranged to meet up there later.



Above the start of the cycle track over the Severn Bridge  
Below, towards Wales from the middle of the bridge



Over the bridge into Wales. The bridge is quite exposed. Being on a bike there is time to take in the view. Through Chepstow and up the A466 towards Monmouth.



After following the A466 for a few miles I arrived at Tintern Abbey.

A good dinner and I was off again heading for All Stretton and still a few miles to go. The road follows the Wye for quite a way as it meanders its way down the valley very broad and brown, I assume that was because of recent weather.



Keep going A49 !!!!!





Hereford at last



Down the road into the town, nice long bit of down hill and the first sight of the cathedral

I was supposed to meet Rachel outside a supermarket in on the outskirts of Hereford. This is where we had a bit of a panic on, Rachel's phone died we missed one another. Eventually we got together again and headed off to All Stretton Bunk house. It became apparent that we were going to arrive late at All Stretton so we decided to eat at Craven Arms and cook the food we'd got for our evening meal in the morning and have it for lunch the next day. Then I followed a sign that pointed down a country lane to "Craven Arms" This lane started to go up hill then a bit steeper and on and on and steeper. At that point I should have turned and gone back to the main road. But being tired and hungry I carried on. Eventually I came to the top of the hill and set of down to Craven Arms came to a cross roads and found the sign buried in the hedgerow. After what seemed like an eternity I entered Craven Arms and found Rachel, she'd found a chippy, Well done. Now I'd heard and read on the forum of end to enders having double dinners, I was now about to experience that phenomenon, two steak pies chips and a battered sausage, that was just for me!!!! We called it a day and loaded the bike into the car and after our food we headed off to All Stretton.

**Total mileage 103.39**

**Total time 7h 59m 29s**

**Ave speed 12.9**

**Max speed 33.0**

#### Day four All Stretton to Home



All Stretton Bunkhouse, an unmanned hostel



Inside the bunk house



Restarting at Craven arms

Coming up from Craven Arms the A49 passes through Church Stretton, where on the Monday morning a group of people were engaged in a good old fashioned British pass time.



A few more miles and I'll be through Shrewsbury then Whitchurch and into Nantwich where we'd planned to meet Nigel and Liz two friends of ours from the Derbyshire Caving Club.



Rachel with Nigel and Liz, I think she was telling them how I'd almost set off without my bike computer. From here I was on home ground, I'd done quite a bit of my training for my

ride around Nantwich and Holmes Chapel. Not long to go before I'm home. And a wonderful welcome home! I'd put an order in for Sausage mash and onion gravy. I could smell it as I rode up the drive, Denise was busy cooking Sarah came out and gave me a hug and ushered me in, get a shower, teas nearly ready, so we had a big family get together Sarah and Dan, Rachel and Nick, Denise and myself. And as the huge bowl of mash potato came round every one said "That's not just for you" It was a great meal to come home to, just what I'd wanted. Sarah made me have a nice hot bath to ease my muscles she put all sorts of things in it, and it was quite relaxing. But an early night was called for as I had an early start the following day.

**Total distance 82.25**

**Total time 5h 35m 44s**

**Ave speed 14.7**

**Max speed 28 mph**

### **Day five Home to Kendal**

Early start, I carried just enough to get me through, as Rachel was having the day off, I'd got about 90miles to go today and was quite ok with the route as it had been another of my training rides to go up to Preston. Having lived locally for many years I was soon on my way passing the factory where I served part of my apprenticeship as a fitter. As a 16 year old I used to cycle to work, little did I know then, that one day I would pass the factory on my way to John O'Groats.



I was to take the road through Altrincham and Dunham out towards the Warburton Toll Bridge, over the Manchester Ship Canal





A short spell on the A57 the turn off onto the B5212 to Culcheth, A574 to Leigh, A 579 to Atherton, then the B5235 through Westhoughton, and out onto the A6. I was to meet Mr Peter Ward a friend of the chairman of the company I work for. Peter is a keen club cyclist and was to take me through to Kendal. I actually missed a turning in Atherton and it put me back by about 30 min while I got back on route to the A6. Peter had told me he was in an Ice cream shop at the top of a hill I recalled that a few weeks earlier I had seen it as I rode past. It wasn't too long before I found Peter in Fredericks the Ice cream and Coffee shop just outside Chorley. We introduced ourselves, had a drink and set off towards Preston. We set a really good pace and by mid day we were just outside Preston.

Peter knew some quieter roads to get us towards the town centre and we were soon heading out towards Garstang and a spot of lunch at the Pinewood Coffee Shop. As we entered there was a group of ladies and Peter was telling them about my Lands End to John O'Groats ride, we had a good chat with the ladies had our lunch and set off for Lancaster. Further on we crossed the end of the Lancaster canal where the M6 motorway cuts through the canal at Tewitfield locks



Into Lancaster and Peter showed me the Millennium Cycle Bridge

We followed some quiet country lanes for a while and as we approached the village of Natland on the outskirts of Kendal Peter took his leave of me, I thanked him for his time and company. He had quite a distance to go to return home. We said farewell and with a cheery wave we both set off, Peter for home and me for Kendal. It wasn't long before I was in the town and while looking for the Youth Hostel, the Clock in the town centre started to chime, inside the tower is a carillon of 11 bells and they played a military march. The following morning I heard the bells again and it was a nursery rhyme tune this time.

I found Kendal YHA next to the Brewery Arts Centre. I booked in and locked the bike away in the shed, found a local takeaway and had something to eat. The dorm I was in was in the roof of the building, which was fitted with roof lights. Out came the camera and two pictures of Kendal from the roof.





The Town hall (or White Hall as I believe it is called) Clock is just left of centre



Kendal looking south

Later on that evening I sent Peter a text message, thanking him for his time and company and hoping that he arrived home safe and well, not long after I received a call off him to say he was home and he'd covered a distance of 115 miles that day! 20 more than I did! Peter was the last of my three escorts all of whom had excellent route knowledge, and were great cycling companions. I was almost half way into the journey. The rest was to be just Rachel and myself. I decide on an early night as tomorrow was the climb up Shap.

**Total Mileage 94.78**

**Total time 6h 52m 11s**

**Average speed 13.7**

**Max speed 28.6**

### **Day six Kendal to Gretna**

Rachel had set off early on Wednesday morning and met me in a car park in Kendal where we decided on the day's itinerary. I wanted my picture taken as I climbed Shap so armed with video and digital cameras Rachel set of to await my arrival. It is a long climb to the top of Shap but after training in the Peak District it wasn't as bad as I'd thought. The weather was just right, cool, and the head winds were not to bad.



Not far to go!





Almost there



The Memorial

The inscription on the memorial, the actual summit is a few yards further on.

From here it was over the top and down into Penrith then on to Carlisle, Rachel was waiting for me at Carlisle Castle. Quick refill of the bar bag with food, well, chocolate, a banana, biscuits and tangerines. From Carlisle I was to take the NCN 7 route which is the old road and is unclassified, it follows the M6 towards Gretna and is not too easy to find as it starts in a small industrial / shopping area once through there it's quite easy to follow. Very quiet very little traffic.



North of Carlisle on the NCN 7 the M6 is visible in the background.



Crossing the River Esk



The First and Last house



Entering Scotland.





**Total Mileage 61.00**  
**Total Time 4h 30m 49s**  
**Average speed 13.5**  
**Max speed 41.3**

### **Day seven Gretna to Loch Lomond**

One of the good parts of having a Support vehicle when riding an End to End, is that when your riding a bike and book your night stop on a motorway transport is available to get you there! When I planned the route Todhills was shown as being on the A74 it was a few weeks later when Rachel volunteered to drive as support and I rebooked that I found out it was actually on the M6 hence our stop in Gretna to go back to Todhills, in the morning we drove down to Carlisle round the roundabout and back up to Gretna to restart. And follow NCN 74. The route follows the B7076 up to Abington where it becomes the B7078. The road takes you through Ecclefechan the birthplace of Thomas Carlyle, poet, writer and satirist



Another 20 miles further up the road and I reached Beattock

The road is well made and wide and quiet. Well it was until I heard a jet fighter aircraft this one was about 400 / 500 yards away, I stopped to watch it, when over the top came another. Speed no idea but fast, altitude low, type Mmmm looked like a Harrier, but? All over in seconds.

Further up from the town of Beattock the road is sandwiched between the M74 and the West coast Main line.



Not much further up and the summit of Beattock is reached at 314 meters. A few more miles and turn onto the A702 to Abington, then onto the B7078, and head towards Glasgow I had been happily following the NCN74 towards Glasgow when I came to a “T” junction with the sign “End of route” Oh! I was still some distance from Glasgow so I set off following the Glasgow signs. Rachel had found a Transport café just down the road and I joined her there we decided to have something to eat, I was wearing one of my Lands end to John O’Groats shirts and a couple of drivers gave a smile and we sat chatting to a couple outside. Rachel wrote down a route card for me to follow through to Glasgow, but it soon became difficult. I got some more directions off a police man and gradually worked my way into the city. Knowing that I had to cross the Clyde I made that my objective. I reached the south side of the Clyde and sought further directions, I was told in a broad Scottish accent “Ye have tae go over the squinty Bridge” Ok right, no problem he took the time to explain, realising I was having trouble with the accent. That was Scottish gentleman no1, the second was a young man on a mountain bike who pulled alongside “where you going?” “Loch Lomond then onto John O’Groats” “have you got enough food? My flat is up the road your welcome to a meal”. I thanked him for his kindness and assured him I would be ok. He pointed me in the direction of the bridge. Two minutes later I was on it



The “Squinty Bridge”



One of the Dockyard Cranes, taken from the Bridge

Getting out of Glasgow proved just as difficult as getting in eventually I made it out onto the road to Loch Lomond and headed to towards Arden and the Hostel. It had been a long day and I eventually saw the sign hostel 300yds





A beautiful building, it had been acquired during the second world war for American troops. After the war they got together and raised funds to purchase the building and gave it to the Scottish Youth Hostel Association.



The inscriptions Read

*"Peace be with all who beneath this  
roof tree rest"*

*Peace with the coming and the parting guest*

Rachel was busy making something to eat in the spacious kitchen and dining area. I was hungry and on double dinners again.

**Total mileage 115.20**

**Total time 8h 54m 35s**

**Ave speed 12.9**

**Max speed 28.00**

**Day eight Loch Lomond to Fort William**



One last look at Loch Lomond SYHA, before heading off for Fort William. The road runs alongside the Loch for several miles. The weather was fine and our first encounter with the Scottish Midges, not enough to cause a problem once I got moving it was fine. I was now to follow the A82 all the way to Fort William. I didn't find it too bad, I've heard some people say it's not a good road as it's busy, I must have been lucky as I didn't find it busy at all, It is narrow in places but I found somewhere to pull over and let the traffic past then carried on. I met up with a couple of lads who were Le JOG'ing we were having a chat when a couple of girls who had been staying at Loch Lomond turned up. They had been passing one another for a couple of days. I set off having said I'll probably see further on. Sure enough at Crianlarich I was just taking a picture of the town sign when the two lads turned up, so I got in the picture as well



From Crianlarich the road starts to climb up towards Rannoch Moor.



Wild and rugged scenery

The top of Rannoch Moor



The way down into Glencoe



I was hoping for a nice run down into Glencoe but head winds again!



At last! We were staying just the other side of Fort William at Farr Cottage in Corpach.

When arrived we were the only ones there. I put the bike into their bike store and got changed as we were to meet some friends in Fort William, Wendy and Dave had finished walking the West Highland Way on Thursday the day before and on the Friday we met them they had been up Ben Nevis. On arrival back at Farr Cottage we found other guests had arrived. Saturday was the start of the Caledonian Challenge, 54 miles in 24hours part of which was to be on Ben Nevis. We all wanted an early night and every one was trying to be as quiet as possible.

In the morning we were all wishing one another good luck.

**Total mileage 90.94**

**Total time 6h 12m 56s**

**Ave speed 14.6**

**Max speed 30.1**



## Day nine Fort William to Helmsdale

The day started with our first and only real encounter with the midges, hundreds of them all swarming round the back of the car as we were trying to get ready. This was the fastest getaway ever! Rachel was going to do some shopping in Fort William, we quickly decided on the Commando Memorial at Spean Bridge as the next rendezvous point, and off we went. I stopped at the Caledonian Canal to take a photo of the Road and Rail Bridges when I heard the familiar sound of a Class 37 diesel loco, (railways are another of my interests). Out from behind some trees appeared the loco and train.



37676 Loch Rannoch about to cross the Caledonian Canal

The Commando memorial at Spean Bridge



Dropping down towards Loch Lochy from The Commando Memorial on the A82. The road is just about level with the cloud in the valley. The weather was cool and damp, but the road was good! This particular weekend was "Rock Ness" and I was constantly passed by high powered motorcycles, I assume heading for the event. I had seen police check points near Glencoe and another on the road up to Spean Bridge.





Fishing boat on Loch Oich

Still quite a way to go, to get to Inverness, Loch Oich is the smallest of the three lochs. The weather was improving a bit and getting warmer



John Cobb's Memorial



The inscription



The first sign for John O'Groats.



This was the first indication that my calculation of the mileage I had to do was a bit out. I knew that Helmsdale our night stop was 54 miles from John O'Groats, on that basis Helmsdale was 57 miles from here, and the time was 16.40, would I make Helmsdale? Or do we change the plan? In the end we changed the plan I rode for another couple of hours. Rachel found a garage forecourt near Clashmore. We packed the bike in the car and drove up to Helmsdale. So Day ten was going to be a long one! And not the short day I'd hoped for.

**Total mileage 110.73**

**Total time 7h 51m 55s**

**Ave speed 14.00**

**Max speed 28.00**

### **Day ten Helmsdale to John O'Groats**

A good breakfast and Rachel made some sandwiches with bacon eggs and sausage. We had to drive back to Clashmore to restart.



The garage at Clashmore.

The day was cold overcast and those interminable headwinds and more miles to do! But I was now in double figures 84 to go! A couple of hours later Helmsdale Hostel came into sight.



The building was an old school gym that had been converted, despite the fact it was quite basic it was very warm and homely. When we arrived the warden came out and greeted us, and handed me a card that had been sent from work from some of my colleagues.



Well nearly, I still had a few miles to go!

Then it was on to Berriedale, but before there the road started to climb.





The weather was still cold and I could see cloud moving in



Above a view from the road, looking down at the sea.



The Village of Berriedale



Nothing wrong with the picture that's cloud at the top!

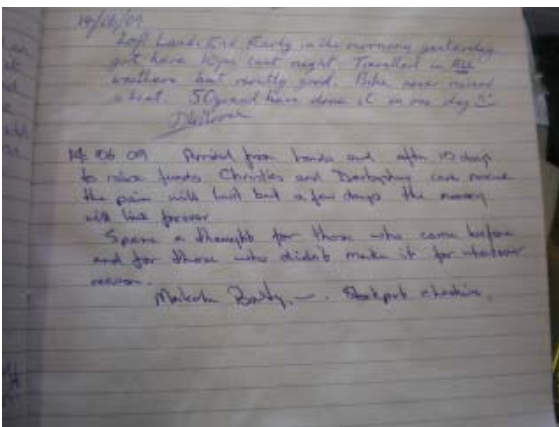
So onward we went! I was conscious of time getting on and became concerned that I wouldn't be able to sign the book at John O'Groats. Rachel contacted the End To End club in Cornwall while I pressed on. I was still south of Wick A short time later she sent me a text to say she was in the Tesco car park outside Wick. I arrived there at 4.20 pm Rachel jumped out of the car "You've got till 6pm the book will be in the Last House" I'd got 16 miles to go. So I dumped the panniers in the car my parting words "Right I'm going for it, see you" off I went, cold, wet, tired and head winds. I started to watch the miles count down. There was a right turn I had to make. I think it was at Reiss Rachel was in front of me, she waved me across the junction. I was watching the miles fall off now over one headland onto the next. A bit later on I passed Rachel at the side of the road hanging out of the driver's window, "you're in single figures!" "I know". Over one last hill then another, finally 2 miles to go, over the hill, and there was more! Another headland and water, I looked down to the road thinking this is not going to happen! I'll not get there before six pm, there must be another six or seven miles yet, feeling worn out I looked up, then I realised I was looking at an island! I thought that must be the Shetland isles (geography was never my strong point) I'd forgotten that the Orkneys come first! I looked again and saw the buildings at John O'Groats. It was nearly 5.10 pm, and two miles to go. So with a new vigour I carried on and into the car park at John O'Groats. Looking for the Start / Finish line I ask a couple if they'd seen it, somewhat bewildered they said "no" I told them I'd come from Lands End, "Oh" " Ooohhh" they pointed to the "Last House" and I saw Rachel outside with the Video camera, and made my way over to her. I parked the bike



against the wall 5.20 pm. The realisation that I'd done it was difficult to take in, the bike was there and so were we, the ride was over. The lady from the shop came to the door "You've made it ok then?" Rachel had primed her that I might be on the last minute. I knew I had to go in and sign the book, get my transit verification form stamped, and I wanted some postcards. But my brain could not co-ordinate the body. Rachel got some post cards while I tried to get my self together. The lady in the shop was really nice I asked her if many end to enders end up like this, she said "Oh yes nearly all of you, they just collapse on the grass outside," just get sorted I'll be tidying the shop give me a shout if you want anything. So we sent a couple of postcards and I signed the book and got my transit verification form stamped.



Finally got there! I'm signing the book and if you look closely you can just see my transit verification form being signed on the other side of the counter.



My entry in the "book"

*14.06.09 Arrived from Land's End after 10 days to raise funds for Christies and Derbyshire cave rescue. The pain will last but a few days, the memory will live forever.*

*Spare a thought for those who came before and for those who didn't make it. For whatever reason.*

*Malcolm Bailey Stockport Cheshire*



**Total mileage 82.28**

**Total time 6h 24m 38 s**

**Ave speed 12.8**

**Max speed 34.9**

**Total ride distance 942.63 miles in 10 days, actual riding time 68 hr 45 min 55 sec.**

### **The route**

Land's End, A30 Penzance, Hayle, Camborne, to Indian Queens, A39 Wadebridge, Camelford, Davidstow, A395, then unclassified roads through Tresmeer, Egloskerry, Launceston, Sourton Down, back onto the A30 then off onto the B3260 for Betty Cottles. Okehampton B3215, A3072 to Copplestone, A377 to Crediton, A3072 to Tiverton, A361 Waterloo Cross, A38 Wellington, Taunton, Bridgwater, Bristol Airport, B3130 through Barrow Gurney, A 370 Long Ashton. Through *Ashton Court* (large park) Clifton Suspension Bridge, across Bristol, to the Seven Bridge, (the route though Bristol was a mystery tour and always will be!) Chepstow A466 Monmouth, A466, then A49 to Hereford, Ludlow, Craven Arms, Church Stretton, (for All Stretton bunk house.) A49 Shrewsbury, Whitchurch, A530 Nantwich, A534 Crewe, Sandbach, A5022, A50 Holmes Chapel, A535 Chelford, Alderley Edge, Handforth, Home. A560 Altrincham, unclassified roads to Dunham, Warburton Toll Bridge over the Ship canal, A57 Cadishead, B5212 Culcheth, A 574, A572 Leigh, A579 Atherton, B5235 Westhoughton, to the A6 Chorley, Preston, Lancaster, Carnforth, A6070, a couple of unclassified lanes that took us into Natland then Kendal. A6 Shap, Penrith, Carlisle, A7 towards the M6 Motorway. Immediately before the motorway is a small shopping centre, and industrial area and the start of the NCN 74 route to Gretna this runs along the edge of the M6. Once you get onto it it's very quiet with very little traffic. From Gretna follow the B7076 past Lockerbie, Beattock, up to the A702 Crawford and Abington, then B7078 Lesmahagow, Kirkmuirhill. On arrival at the A71 the NCN 74 route sign advised me that it was the end of route. Getting through Glasgow was difficult to say the least. I managed it by passing through Bothwell, Uddingston. Then into the city and crossing the Clyde near the Tall ships by using the "Squinty" Bridge. Once across the Clyde I tried to follow the NCN 7 again but gave up and decided to head for the A82 out to Loch Lomond, From Loch Lomond stay with the A82 through Tarbet to Crianlarich, Tyndrum, over Rannoch Moor through Glen Coe, across the bridge at Ballachulish. Onich and Fort William. Onward to Spean Bridge, Fort Augustus, Invermoriston, Drumnadrochit, Inverness. Left onto the A9 for Alness, Tain, Helmsdale, Latheron. A99 to Wick and finally John O'Groats.



John at Regent House with the map. There was a constant flow of enquiries “where is he now?” Note, the Aeroplane denotes where I got “Buzzed” by a Tornado. Originally I thought it was a Harrier.

Home on the Monday evening. After finishing at John O’Groats we travelled over to “Auntie Sue and Uncle Kens” at Cross of Jackston near Inverurie. A good night’s sleep. Then home the following day.



The garage doors at home, unfortunately the damp had got to the letters. It reads “Congratulations”.

My trusty steed ran like a dream. Giant SCR 1.5. Two punctures, the first on day one (rear) was near Indian Queens. The second, (front) just before Carnforth on day five. The rear tyre had started to loose some of the “Kevlar” thread through the sidewall, I kept an eye on it and eventually changed it at Gretna.

Finally to all those I met on route and those who donated to the charities thank you for your generosity kindness and interest. To the other end to enders I hope you all made it safely.

*Malcolm Bailey*