



Brian & Si's 2011 JOGLE

Saturday 23 April - 2 May 2011

Day 1 – Saturday – John O'Groats to Aness

After Si retiring to bed early last night and Brian a bit later when full of haggis, we awoke to a Continental breakfast because the B&B landlady was too tight to get up and make breakfast for the cyclists in her establishment of which there were quite a few.

We set off for a very bleak and windy John O'Groats where at 8 in the morning it was like rush hour for cyclists. After freezing our whatsits off prepping and taking photos, Brian and Si finally set off at 8.20am. I took the same route in the car although began to regret it a bit as single track roads with passing places are not ideal for a car towing a trailer. Note to a Mercedes driver – it's easier for you to reverse your car to the previous passing place rather than watch me do it with a trailer.

Main events of Day 1:

- Brian suffering aches and pains in feet, head and shoulders for first 10 miles
- Si suffering backache all day from when he fell out of bed last night
- Major headwind when they turned south at Bettyhill which stayed with them all day
- Si lost mudguard screw – repaired at side of road
- A rabbit heard Si singing and threw himself under Si's front wheel – suicide does seem extreme solution, but I haven't heard him sing yet.
- Brian broke a spoke
- On a 20mph downhill north of Altnaharra on a single track highland road Brian's derailleur jammed, the hanger snapped, swung back and clipped the mudguard bracket, mudguard jammed the wheel, tyre blew out. Si says it was snap, crack, skid and bang. Fortunately Brian was OK but shaken up.
- I had just arrived at the next B&B in Aness and drove back for 1 hour with the repair kit – his bike beyond repair at side of road so he ended up on my hybrid bike which I use for towpaths and commuting to the station. Complained about the uncomfortable saddle and lack of clip in pedals.....
- Car damaged by trailer

Fantastic views of Highlands today (in my case more than I'd bargained for). Lots of cyclists on the road mainly going in a northerly direction – mmm. One poor soul on her own pushing her bike with loaded panniers and tons of shopping on the handlebars. Saw her on a road

which took 1 hour to drive along and she was at the beginning. Si and Brian saw her bike later, abandoned at the side of the road, still with shopping on, and no sign of her.

Checked into B&B in Alness at 8pm. Everything shut except chippie. Brian spent an hour rebuilding his bike – all his spares are now used so nothing can happen until Tuesday when the cycle shops are open.

Very friend people at the B&B – thanks to them for use of their shed for the repairs.

Day 2 - Easter Sunday - Alness to Connel

A sunny start, wet in the middle and dry at the end. Thankfully no mechanical problems today – just bodily problems (aches, pains and fatigue). The guys are discovering why most cyclists do this route south to north. The winds are extremely demoralising.

Main points of Day 2:

- “Undulating” is the official word of the tour (over-used by me evidently when describing what’s coming up)
- Close call with a coach driver on the Loch Ness road
- Loch Ness was the height of Si’s day and he says he saw a ripple. Was it Nessie we all wonder or was it shopping woman from Day 1 taking a dip.
- Brian was looking forward to seeing Loch Ness again but the pleasure wore off after 2 hours cycling with headwind and horizontal rain, dodging tourist coaches.
- Si assisted Japanese tourist out of the ferns on the banks of the loch. We think he’d jumped off the road and down the bank to get away from Si’s singing.
- Si still suffering with Eskimo roll back injury (see Day 1)
- Passed loads of lochs today (Loch Ness, Loch Lochy, Loch Linnhe, Loch Leven, Loch Creran and Loch Etive). The guys say none are as good as the Fens-Pools, Pensnett, cos there were no whales (no trolley whales, no bike whales, or any cowin whales).
- I met them en route a couple of times, last occasion there were 19 miles to go – they reckon it was 30!

Both getting into the groove now – except for the one you sit on...

Excellent B&B (Grove House) – very friendly people. Glass of wine on arrival, chocolates in the rooms and great food in hotel bar opposite.

Mileage - 123

Day 3 – Easter Monday – Connel to Ochiltree

Going on the route via Arran to avoid cycling anywhere near Glasgow and the motorway system around it.

Main events:

- Missed ferry to Arran by 10 minutes and had to wait 1 hour for next one.
- Very picturesque island and 16 hard miles to the ferry on the east coast.

- They were overtaken by a local bus and could see it in the distance for miles ahead as it climbed over the “undulating” route.
- Brian looking at scenery and took unplanned shortcut off road in rush to get to the ferry – somersaulted onto verge – unscathed but covered in grass.
- Got to ferry as they were about to pull up the ramp. Health and safety jobsworth wouldn't let them come down the passenger ramp because they had bikes with them (even if they walked them down). Had to wait 3 hours in Brodick for the next one.
- While waiting they treated themselves to a great seafood meal and also for Si a sticky toffee pudding which he voted the best he's ever had. Si starting a sticky toffee pudding national survey.
- Meanwhile I was caught in bank holiday traffic on the shores of Loch Lomond and sat nav directed me into the centre of Paisley where it took me round the industrial estates and past St Mirren football ground. Not as scenic as Arran and no nice seafood or sticky toffee pudding.
- I got to B&B (Laigh Tarbeg Dairy Farm) in Olichtree and sussed out the best route for the guys later on in the dark.
- Si (the Moth) James struggling with effects of Brian's brighter than bright flashing lights.
- Guided them in through the country lanes at 10.30pm.
- Greeted by the security cow mooing and the farmer gave them scones, shortbread and tea. Another good place to stay

Make or break day regarding physical ability to do this and they made it – with a massive effort both physically and mentally.

Mileage – 115 not counting ferries of course

Day 4 – Tuesday – Ochiltree to Penrith

Today it was too windy, too busy, the road surfaces were too rough and the main roads too d*mn dangerous. Note: must give our regards to the good old juggernaut drivers of the nation.

After a bit of a surprise seeing the farmer at the B&B emerging from a bathroom semi-naked, my task was to top the guys up with water and suntan lotion on the route.

- The route started very undulating and finished mildly indulating with a steep bank of a road to the B&B (sorry from me for that).
- Si's tips for Stourbug would be End to Enders: DO: Eat plenty of food and carry loads of vaseline and savlon DON'T: A major DON'T – have the shower too hot and steam clean your backside.
- Brian's tip for would be End to Enders: DON't even think about it....

Stayed at a central B&B (Norcroft Guest House) where the manager hosts lots of cyclists doing the Coast to Coast. Cheats at breakfast were doing it on electric bikes.

Day 5 – Wednesday - Penrith to Acton Bridge

Weather sunny and getting hotter as we head south.

Big Ring Day – so nice for them to be in a high gear at last (even over Shap) and not into wind at last – and proper English road surfaces (hoorah!) Don't know what the Scots are spending their money on, but it's not the roads.

- Si picked up some debris from the road and it messed up his mudguard – repairs at side of road.
- Route difficult to follow through main towns – loads of traffic and no signs to the minor roads.
- Brian had a very near miss with a Renault driver who suddenly remembered where she lived in Warrington and did a sudden left – Brian's tyre centimetres from the side of the car at speed. A very scary moment which left him shaking.
- I spent morning in Penrith waiting for the damaged wheel from Day 1 to be repaired in a bike shop, and re-stocked with Pro Bars in Holland & Barrett.
- Weather very sunny and I was called to bring the suntan lotion, but got caught in loads of traffic so Brian threatened to fire me as I didn't catch up with them, even though I did 2 junctions on the M6. You know what he can do...
- Met other cyclists doing End to End and raided their support vehicle.
- I met their support driver later on who is as long suffering as me.
- Si's tip of the day – use savlon and vaseline - or has he mentioned that already?

Guest house with very posh rooms. Si in African room (we can hear the elephant trumpeting) and me and Brian in the Feng Shui.

Planned finish for tomorrow, Hereford, Land of the Lonely Heart.

Mileage – 111 / Average 14.3mph.

Day 6 – Thursday – Acton Bridge to Hereford

At breakfast this morning Si informed us that he had dreamt of a Zulu warrior standing over his bed with a spear – must be the African themed room that got to him. He showed us the female warrior statue in the corner of his room – very strange indeed.

- Undulating today (what again!) More long long steady climbs and a really nasty one at a place called Hope.
- Saw sign to Tiverton and thought we were nearing Devon (fat chance).
- It seemed to be a slower pace today due to injuries - feet and ankles. Achilles tendons are giving real trouble and regular deep freeze and deep heat applied by the roadside. Support vehicle is becoming like a travelling pharmacy.
- Rough roads and weather hotter now as we head south. Pharmacy also carrying lots of suntan lotion, but it hasn't stopped Brian and Si having white helmet strap marks.
- They both reached a very low ebb today and cycled through lots of pain.
- Finished at Hereford, bought bags of frozen peas and drove home with the peas on their ankles (not a faggot in sight).

Mileage – 105 / Average 14mph /max speed 33.9

Day 7 – Friday – Hereford to Bridgwater

After spending a night at home and washing cycling gear, set off to Hereford to the finishing place of yesterday.

- Light wind today and guess what, it was from north – the first time they've had a tail wind. Cloudy then sunny later.
- Route from Hereford through Monmouth to Chepstow, very very undulating, and very scenic. I stopped to take photo of Tinturn Abbey and met 2 walkers who told me they met a guy at their hostel who was walking from John O'Groats to Land's End in 3 months.
- Brian and Si met me at a village store for breakfast as there had been no one at last night's B&B to cook breakfast this morning.... Girl in the village store dressed as Captain Jack Sparrow.
- At Chepstow Race Course met the travelling pharmacy again as my car is now known, and both in a lot of really bad pain. Si said he was seriously thinking of putting Deep Heat on his testicles to distract him from the rest of the pain. Would it affect his singing we wondered.
- Brian got stung in the bushes by nettles just to add some more pain.
- Both on painkillers as well today.
- A very complicated route around Bristol.
- Interesting cross winds on cycle paths of M48 and M5 bridges – they had to lean in to keep going, then up came a wall which suddenly protected them and they nearly fell off.
- Avonmouth Bridge cycle path – like the Crystal Maze trying to find the start of it.
- In the docks, used the toilets at a pub called The Albion.
- Stopped short at Bridgwater because of excruciating pains, especially in achilles. Si's ankles look like he has elephantitis. I met them and we drove to B&B in Norton Fitzwarren (The Old Rectum.. I mean Rectory). Sorry, the guys have got me on this subject a lot.

Mileage – 93 / Average speed 13.7 / max speed 45mph.

Day 8 – Saturday - Bridgwater to Two Bridges

Breakfast overpowered this morning by the smell of Deep Heat and Germolene. Good thing we were the only ones in the dining room.

Si reported that the locum pharmacist (appropriate profession in the circumstances) in the room next door had been pacing up and down on the creaking floorboards all night, talking to himself. Poor Si was kept awake. The proprietor said he'd been staying for weeks and behaved very erratically – he is diabetic and eats cake in huge quantities.

Drove to finish point of yesterday. Overcast day and cooler than yesterday.

- Si and Brian met other cyclists and compared injuries at side of road.
- We all got lost in Exeter, trying to find B route out of the city.
- Route over Dartmoor - hills, hills and more hills. Sheeps Walks x 10.
- Pharmacy met them at intervals for supply of painkillers and application of Deep Heat, Germoline and Vaseline (they apply it themselves by the way!)
- Ride finished just short of plan due to Si's swollen ankles

- Coming down steep hill on moor Si had issue with sheep in road – looking hard with picture of dead rabbit in hand’ looking to give Si a problem. Must of been friend of a late Scottish rabbit.

Another great B&B (Coombe Wood Lodge, Lamerton). Both rooms had big baths and Si’s had a duck so Brian and me went off to the local pub later and left Si soaking in the bath with his duck.

Mileage – 69 / Average speed – 12.9mph

Day 9 - Sunday - Two Bridges to Truro

Took the guys back to Two Bridges on Dartmoor where they finished yesterday.

- Nice to get off the Moors, with only 3 climbs.
- Welcome to Cornwall!– weather cold and wet.. Major torrential downpour at Dobwalls.
- Because of Day 1’s major bike incident, Brian has no mudguards so got a very wet bum.
- Big climbs (a lot of undulating) which were very hard but after all the pain they’ve gone through, they found them just acceptable. They are just used to pain now.
- Si’s steep hill at Lostwithiel was a disappointment – after the hills in the Highlands it was a pussy cat hill.
- Si did the John Wayne dance outside Tescos in St Austell where they met up with one of Si’s girls and had a quick coffee. Brian provided the music and background laughter.
- Coming down a hill into a village, Brian broke the 30mph speed limit doing 38mph and overtook a startled motorist.
- Excruciating pain in ankles again so painkillers but thankfully only one more day on them.
- Brian hit his head on the sloped ceiling of the guest house room so has a lump on his head to add to everything else.

Stayed at Chycara Guest House – very good indeed and friendly people. Great local pub for food – The Royal Oak, run by a military type – what ho, chocks away ginger....

Last day tomorrow – looking forward to a pasty / pint / good night’s sleep (no early start / cycling!)

Mileage 62 / Average speed 13.1mph

Day 10 – Monday - Truro to Land’s End

Finally, finally the last day has dawned and the shortest leg of the challenge is nigh and the finish line almost in sight.

- After a good send off from the couple at the guest house, they set off for Redruth, Penzance and then, joy oh joy, Land’s End.

- Very very extremely ridiculously windy which got worse and worse the nearer the finish they got.
- Lots of undulations (definitely the word of the trip).
- Stopped for coffees en route and as approaching Land's End kept thinking this might be the last hill in England – it wasn't...
- They were over the last hill before we realised and freewheeling into the finish hand in hand.
- Unfortunately 2 metres from the finish line they were both prevented from crossing the line by a load of pensioners disembarking very slowly from their coach. I was jumping up and down gesticulating to the coach driver and eventually disembarkation was paused to allow safe passage over the finish line, to cheering and shouts of congratulations.
- Had photos taken by signpost (the fingers were in place, unlike one at John O'Groats where they were missing).

B&B is big old farmhouse near St Just and Si found his bath duck had followed him from Tavistock.

Application of usual pharmaceutical products took place and a relaxing time before celebrating later in the local hostelrys of St Just.

Mileage – 38 / Average speed 14.2mph



Both Brian and Simon say this challenge was the most demanding physically and mentally, they both went through a lot of pain but battled through and would not give up. Brian only pushed his bike once - 5 miles uphill due to incident on Day 1. A journey of extremes. When they were high they were very high and when they were low they were very low. They played a lot of mind games to get them through.

They are glad they've done it but would never ever do it again in the same time period.

Finally, thank you for all the good wishes and support along the way. See you all soon – on a ride????!!!!!!

Statistics

Leg	Milage	Ave Speed MPH	Climbed (M)	Ride Time
1	124	11.9	1825	10.23
2	123	13.2	1356	9.18
3	115	13.5	1804	9.46
4	104	12.4	1183	8.22
5	111	14.3	1291	7.45
6	104	14.0	1235	7.30
7	93	13.7	1075	6.48
8	69	12.9	1563	5.21
9	62	13.1	1719	4.43
10	38	14.2	801	2.40
Totals	943	13.3	13852	70.36