

# Peter & Janes MacJOGLE



John O'Groats to Lands End by bike  
May-June 2010

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# Introduction

In May 2010 we cycled from John O’Groats to Lands End taking 3 weeks to cover the 1000 miles.

The purpose of this journey was to achieve a personal challenge, see some places we had never visited before and raise money for charity.

It took a lot of planning and was hard work but also a lot of fun.

Many people ask “*why MacJOGLE?*” It stands for **Mac**millan **J**ohn **O’G**roats to **L**ands **E**nd ride.

The purpose of this journal is to share some of our experiences along the way as well as to provide a guide to help others who may aspire to follow in our tyre tracks.

This journey is well within the capability of anyone with a reasonable level of fitness.

During the journey we published a daily blog and we have used this to form the framework for this journal.

Each section is followed by our blog as it was written. Peter’s blog is in blue while Jane’s is in red.

We hope you enjoy reading this account as much as we enjoyed writing about it.

Peter & Jane Harris

September 2010

## Early Planning

The idea of doing the End to End came to me while sitting having a cup of tea in the Cyclists Cafe at Greystoke while doing the Sustrans Coast to Coast ride three years ago. I had taken up cycling again in my mid 50s after a long gap and had already done the London to Paris Ride and a CTC Triennial 100 mile challenge. Bigger challenges beckoned and the Coast to Coast ride from Whitehaven to Newcastle was the natural progression. I rode the C2C with a friend Bob supported by our wives in the car who carried all our luggage and ran the bath at each nights B&B.

Reading the visitors book at the Cyclists Cafe at Greystoke on the C2C route I was interested in the stories written by End to Enders whose paths had crossed ours. During the next couple of days cycling I decided to go for the “big one”.

The original plan was to do this over 2 weeks and supported. Anything longer than this was going to be difficult with work commitments. I got inspiration from a number of web journals, in particular Rob & Joes JOGLE which made me think about whether I wanted to do it the usual LEJOG (Lands End to John O’Groats) direction or JOGLE (John O’Groats to Lands End)

Much has been written about the relative merits of each but the prevailing South Westerly wind is the deciding factor in most cyclists’ decision to go South to North. There are, however, a number of other factors to consider.

- **Logistics.** It is much easier to get to JOG than it is to get back. Trains have to be booked a long time in advance with cycle reservations and if you do not arrive on the appointed day and time you may miss your slot. It is also a long way back to the Midlands from JOG and a single train journey back from Penzance seemed more attractive than the alternative. Of course, if supported then this would not be an important consideration – but more on that later.
- **Hills.** Surely it’s downhill from North to South? It is actually uphill as Lands End is at the top of the cliffs while John O’Groats is almost at sea level! It comes as a shock to many LEJOGers just how hilly Cornwall is. It’s “in at the deep end” if doing it South to North. Scotland is also hilly but the hills are generally less steep than their Cornish equivalents. It seemed more sensible to leave them until a bit of route fitness had set in.
- **Civilisation.** Scotland is beautiful but some of it is a bit wild without much in the way of settlements along the way. My thought was that I would appreciate Scotland’s wild beauty more at the start rather than the end of the journey. John O’Groats is a very bleak place and not a nice place to arrive in the pouring rain. Scotland is also very big. It’s a shock to see that the Scottish / English border is approximately half way. I felt that psychologically the second half through Scotland could be quite tough thinking you are “almost there” as you cross the border. The idea of moving back into civilisation in the land of cream teas and pasties was a whole lot more attractive
- **Weather.** Similarly, moving south *should* bring warmer and better weather as the journey progresses

It was not a straightforward decision, however, and early plans regularly alternated between LEJOG and JOGLE with a final decision on the north to south JOGLE option.

Timing was another issue to consider. I needed to do it in 12 days to fit into a fortnight holiday. That means roughly 75 miles a day. I could do that but I wanted to enjoy it and explore some of the areas I would be cycling through. I therefore decided I would like 3 weeks to do it which means roughly 50 miles a day. Although it was possible to get 3 weeks off work I started to think about doing it as a “Retirement Project” after my planned reduction in the working week following my 60<sup>th</sup> birthday in 2010. This seemed to be a much more interesting idea and I therefore pencilled it in for May 2010.

## The Route

During a walking holiday in The Lakes I bought a book “Lands End to John O’Groats – The Great British Bike Adventure” by Phil Horsley. This describes a variety of routes along mainly minor roads and ideal for doing over 3 weeks. The book is written from a LEJOG perspective but is useable from the other end. One variant that appealed to me was the route down the Mull of Kintyre via Oban onto the Isle of Arran. This added some extra distance onto the route and some big hills but I felt it was worthwhile due to the fact that it provided a useful way to bypass Glasgow. The maps in the book are a bit difficult to follow but when you get the hang of them they are extremely detailed and at times they extracted us from problems when the GPS route I had plotted was unclear.

Another variation that I decided on at an early stage was to avoid the A9/A99 route down the East coast after leaving JOG and take the route via Bettyhill. Bettyhill is 50 miles to the West of JOG and adds some extra distance but it would be well worth it as the roads are quiet and the scenery spectacular.

The route south of the border has a number of possible variations but I decided to go through the Lakes via Threlkeld and Ambleside rather than the more usual Shap Fell route.

There were two main choices of Mersey Crossing. The route across the marshes at Sankey Bridges was chosen over the alternative via the Runcorn Widnes bridge. The other alternative via Liverpool and “Ferry across the Mersey” was considered but discarded due to the increased distance. Jane’s Dad at Frodsham was a convenient place for a rest day.

The route to Bristol was more-or-less a straight line from Frodsham to the Severn Bridge at Chepstow.

The route through the West Country went via North Exeter where my brother lives and then Launceston and the North Cornish coast. Although hilly the route had to take in Padstow, a place of 1000 happy childhood memories.

Once the route had been decided it was plotted on Memory Map from which distances and height profiles could be calculated. The route was chopped up into convenient sections of roughly 50 miles and from that the stopping places could be decided.





## Change of Plans

The original plan was that I was going to do this on my own – perhaps supported by Jane – but Jane had other ideas! She announced in the Summer of 2009 that she wanted to do it with me. She had memories of her supporting role in the Coast2Coast ride and decided she would rather be part of the action. This came as a bit of a surprise as she was not a born cyclist having hardly cycled more than 10 miles. As a runner, badminton player and regular gym user she was fitter than I was but not a cyclist. Her bike was a sit-up-and-beg shopper and totally unsuitable so the decision was made to buy her a touring bike. So in the Summer of 2009 we made trip up to Spa Cycles in Harrogate and came back with 2 new touring bikes – a Dawes Karakum for Jane and a Dawes Galaxy for me. We had also considered a Thorn cycle with hub gears but this was rejected on the grounds of weight and cost.

## Training

Training started in the Summer of 2009 with a gradual increase from 20 to 30 miles and finally 50 miles. We needed to be able to do 50 miles day after day while carrying 8-10kg of luggage but unfortunately the hard winter of 2009/10 got in the way and prevented any regular long training rides for several months. We bought a static trainer which was useful but really not the same as the real thing.

Fortunately Winter finally gave way to Spring and we were able to get out more regularly, eventually with weighted panniers to get used to carrying our luggage. We were looking for an opportunity to practice sequential day rides and made the decision to ride the Sustrans Devon Coast to Coast in April 2010 – six weeks before starting the JOGLE.

We had previously looked at doing the 100 mile ride from Ilfracombe to Plymouth but the logistics of getting back to the start were a problem. Jane then came up with the obvious solution – do it both ways! We decided to ride South in two 50 mile chunks staying at a very good B&B in Hatherleigh called Raymont House at the midway point. We had a 2 night stay in Plymouth before returning by the same route. This also gave us the opportunity of doing a reality check by managing 5 days living out of panniers before the real thing. This ride was really useful. We were blessed by amazing weather and the mix of easy cycling along the Tarka Trail and Drakes Way together with the heavy duty Devon hills was excellent training. We also had a serious technical failure to deal with when my front tyre blew out spectacularly on day one, shredding the inner tube and tearing the tyre. We survived it however and it was a big learning experience. More importantly we had shown ourselves that we could cycle sequential 50 mile days carrying all our luggage.

## Final Planning

The last 3 months were spent making final tweaks to the route, booking B&B accommodation and transport arrangements to the start and from the finish. We decided that we wanted everything booked in advance to avoid the uncertainty of where we were going to stay each night. This obviously gave us a strict schedule to keep which could have been difficult if we had had a technical or health problem along the way. Our starting date was set as Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May with the finish on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June. We had one rest day scheduled just over half way which could have been used for “catch-up” if we had fallen behind schedule. We also decided to start and finish the journey with short days. This would allow us to reach Lands End at midday so we could enjoy it without feeling rushed. This was meant to be a holiday after all!

Unfortunately the Whit Bank Holiday weekend and half term meant that some B&Bs were booked up as much as 4 months beforehand. One planned stop at Tarbert had to be changed as all accommodation was taken because of a yacht regatta. The other place we encountered problems was in Cornwall where many B&Bs do not take 1 night bookings. We tried where possible to use B&Bs that advertised themselves as “Cyclists Welcome”. Generally (with one notable exception) all our accommodation was of very high standard and the owners were very friendly.

We each carried 2 days change of cycling clothing together with a change of clothes for evenings. Rohan provide a range of easy wash clothing that we could wash in hand basins and dry on radiators.

We spent some considerable time searching for lightweight shoes for evenings and finally settled on Crocs for me and Sanuks for Jane.

## Travel Arrangements

We used the London to Inverness ScotRail sleeper service which we managed to book for the bargain price of £37 by advance planning. It was also necessary to book bikes on this service. We considered getting the train to Wick and then cycling to JOG but decided to use a dedicated cycle courier (Highland Bicycle Transfers) to take us and our bikes from Inverness direct to JOG. It came as a bit of a shock to discover that JOG is a 3 hour drive North of Inverness which already seemed pretty far North after a night travelling! This brought it home to us just how far we had to cycle back! To get to London we cycled to Stratford and caught the train to Marylebone. This cost more than the Inverness Sleeper!

We also decided to prebook the train back from Penzance to Birmingham together with cycle places.

## Equipment

- **Bikes.** We purchased touring bikes for the ride. We got a special deal on 2 tourers from Spa Cycles in Harrogate which later proved to be a slight problem when my Galaxy developed a series of mechanical problems. As we had bought from a distance it was not practical to claim repairs under warranty. The bikes shared many identical components. We changed the Karakum tyres to 700x32 Schwalbe Marathons to match the Galaxy.



*Peter's Bike - Dawes Super Galaxy*



*Jane's Bike – Dawes Karakum*

- **Saddle.** Jane was unhappy with her saddle. In fact she was unhappy with EVERY saddle she tried. We spent almost as much on saddles for Jane as we did on her bike!

Eventually she settled for a RIDO saddle – a strange-looking Y shaped thing that feels a lot more comfortable than it looks. However it was made EVEN more comfortable by the addition of a sheepskin cover from *Celtic Sheepskin*.

- **Panniers.** We were carrying all our luggage. I used Ortlieb Classic Rollers and Jane used Altura panniers. They worked well. Jane used plastic waterproof liners. We both used Altura bar bags.





Peter's Luggage

We each carried 2 days change of cycling clothing with a set of evening clothes. Lightness and ease of washing were the paramount considerations.

We packed one pannier with clean dry clothing and things we would not need to access during the day. The other one had our waterproofs and warmer layers, tools, and any damp or dirty clothing.

- **Navigation.** Because we were planning to use B roads we needed large scale maps. We plotted our route using *Memory Map European edition*. This has the big benefit of allowing you to download tiles of OS 1:50000 maps of any area you choose. We were therefore able to purchase maps of the entire corridor that we would be passing through on our journey without having to buy maps of the whole country. Using mapping software also shows the height profile of any section of the route. We each carried maps of the day's route and profile on our bar bags.

For detailed routing we used a *Satmap Active 10* GPS. This is not a turn-by-turn GPS but shows a scrolling 1:50000 OS map with the route overlaid. This worked very well and we only strayed off the route on a couple of occasions. In each case it was easy to find our way back on course. The Satmap has a sturdy cycle mount but has two problems that limit its usefulness:

1. The screen is difficult to read in full sun
2. It is not waterproof. Initially I used a plastic bag but later bought a dedicated camera waterproofing bag which was excellent.



Satmap Active10 GPS



Satmap in waterproof bag and map case

- **Communication** My Blackberry phone served as telephone, Email client, Blog editor, Camera and occasional GPS. (It has street level navigation unlike the Satmap and helped us find our B&B on a few occasions)

Despite the remoteness of the highlands, we rarely had problems getting a signal.



Peter's Blackberry

## Sponsorship and Publicity

It seemed a shame not to raise some money for all our efforts so we decided to adopt Macmillan Cancer Support as our chosen charity. In December 2009, inspired by Rob Gullen's successful MacRide brand we registered the domain [www.macjogle.co.uk](http://www.macjogle.co.uk) and developed a simple website and justgiving page. We then inserted a flyer with all our Christmas cards telling all our friends about our plans. We were now committed – no going back now!!

In the New Year we contacted our local Macmillan organiser who visited us and gave us extra resources and ideas about fundraising.

I started a campaign at the Pool Medical Centre in Studley and got a lot of support from patients. We also contacted the local press and got mentions in the Redditch Advertiser and Stratford Herald.

Finally I wrote to all GP practices and Hospital Consultants in Warwickshire and Worcestershire asking for sponsorship.

About a week before we were due to start we managed to get hold of two 2010 MacRide jerseys from Rob Gullen. Rob and his friend Jon Porteous were planning to do LEJOG at the same time as we were and we arranged to meet for photographs in our sponsorship jerseys at the Severn crossing. These jerseys also attracted sponsorship from people we encountered along the route.

### *Apologies to Jane Austen (Jane's Blog)*

*It is a truth universally acknowledged that a man in possession of a pension must be in need of a wife to accompany him on some madcap escapade. So it was that I found myself agreeing to cycle from JOG to LE. A thousand miles, give or take. It was either that or go along in a support vehicle. Been there, done that and, between you and me, it can get a bit tedious. And unhealthy. All the cakes and none of the achievement.*

*So, with a few days to go and 8 months of preparation behind us, where have we got to?*

*Those of a nervous disposition (and/or men) look away now.*

*Knickers. After much research I have realised that the only way to go is with two pairs of padded pants, a thinner one to wash out easily and a thicker one with industrial strength padding. So if my bum looks big in this, it's all padding, honest. Also I have acquired a sheepskin saddle cover to hoots of derision, no doubt, from 'serious cyclists'. It does look faintly hilarious, like a misshapen B.B.C. microphone cover. Wish I'd bought it months ago.*

*Pete has been very busy with his new toy, a video camera. stand by for lots of footage of my bum receding into the distance with cheesy soundtrack. We are thinking of remaking 'Touching the Void' involving bicycles and potholes. Are you listening Gloucestershire County Council?*

*Have got to pack tomorrow. It's more a case of what to leave out. Can I manage without mascara? Yes yes, I know, a hairdryer, but most B&Bs provide one, and those who don't will be publicly named and shamed in these pages. Will wind up now. Stand by for more meanderings soon. (Memo to my husband: Large charcoal grey lumps of cumulus with vertical stripes coming out of them are NOT fine weather clouds.)*  
Jane

## The Journey

Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> May – Getting to John O' Groats



Leaving home

We set off from home in scorching sunshine. Buffy had been taken to the cattery for her 3 week holiday the previous day. We cycled the 7 miles to Stratford station half hoping that the weather would continue for 3 weeks and half worrying about whether we would cope with the heat.

When we arrived at Marylebone I had the bright idea of cycling to Euston via Regents Park to avoid the traffic. Big mistake – the park was seething with people enjoying the sunshine. There were also signs warning us not to cycle so we walked most of the way across the park. Rejoining Euston Road was a bit of a shock to us country folk but we made it to Euston with about 4 hours to kill before our

sleepers to Inverness.

We had the intention of leaving our bikes and going off to find somewhere to eat but the row of broken cycle locks and dismembered bikes outside Euston made us rethink our plans. The left luggage office wasn't interested in looking after our bikes either so we stayed padlocked to them for the next 4 hours while we tried out the local ales.

As luck would have it, we stumbled across *The Bree Louise*, Camra's North London pub of the year which had an amazing range of cask ales. The rest of the 4 hours passed very quickly!



Remains of a bike at Euston



Euston



Bike storage on the train

The sleeper left Euston at 9pm. The bikes were securely stowed in the guards van but as the train splits at Edinburgh it was necessary to ensure that they were in the correct section. Our sleeping berth was unbearably hot and the attendant moved us to another berth. We woke up in the night when the train split, with a sudden panic that we were now heading for Fort William while our bikes were headed for Inverness! Fortunately we were still in the right section.

As it got light and we were approaching Inverness we looked out at a different world, it was pouring with rain and freezing cold. Quite a difference from the heat of London!

At Inverness we were met by Kyle, our driver to John O'Groats. Our bikes were securely stowed in his van and we slipped into a nearby supermarket for some breakfast as that supplied on the train was not really what a long distance cyclist needed.

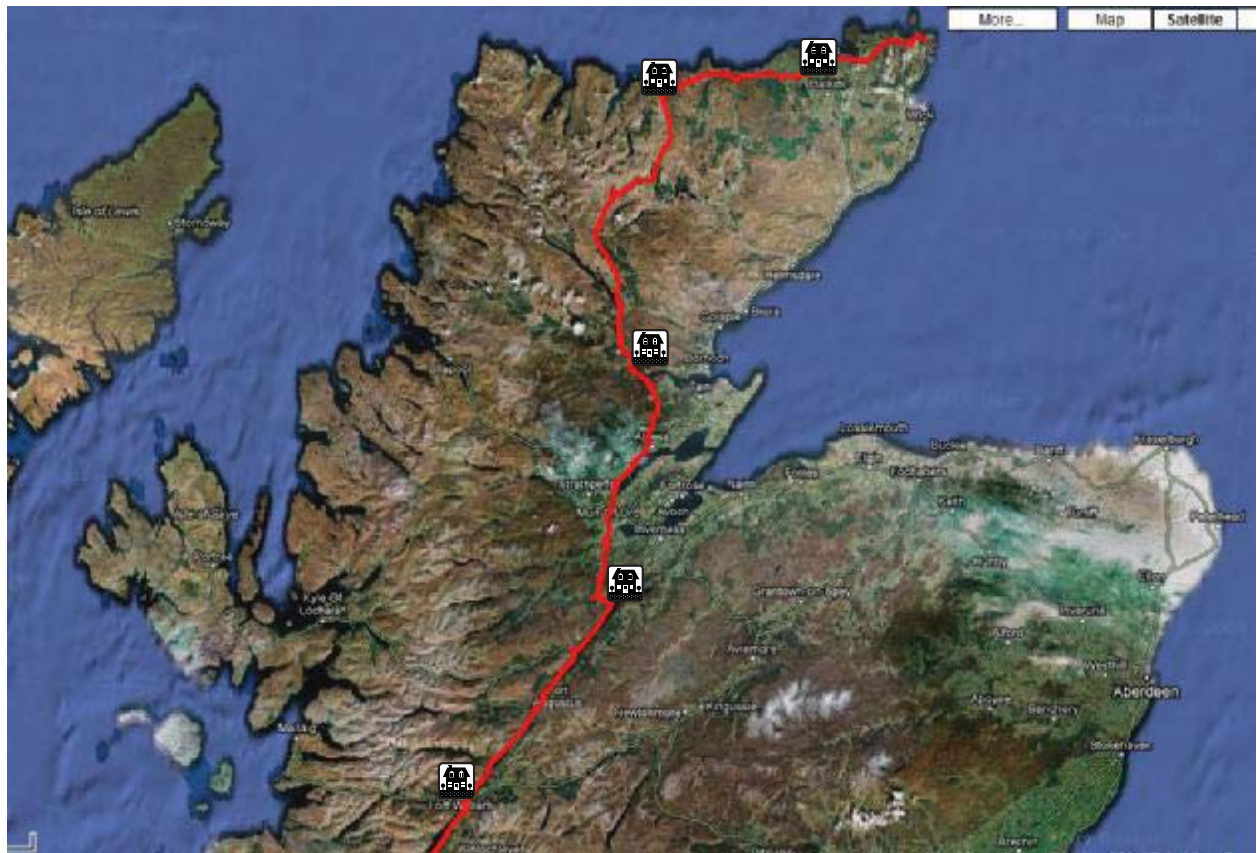


Kyle and his van

The 3 hour journey up the A9/A99 to Wick and John O'Groats was delightful as the sun came out. The coastline was beautiful but we were glad that we had decided not to ride back down the same road as it looked very busy. We passed a number of cyclists on the final stage of their LEJOG. One was clearly struggling with knee problems and we wondered how we would be feeling in 3 weeks time!



# John O'Groats to Fort William 200 miles



Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May - John O'Groats to Thurso 20 miles



As we arrived at John O'Groats at mid-day it started raining again and we sheltered from the rain and strong Northerly wind in the new café.

It has to be said that John O'Groats is a bit of a dump. There is a boarded up hotel, a signpost (if you are lucky) and the new café which was actually very good and the first stage of redevelopment plans that were posted on the wall. John O'Groats is actually nearly at sea level whereas the cliffs at Lands End are 200 feet high – so we were travelling uphill! The map made it look downhill!



We met a cyclist who had just arrived from Lands End – via the coast – 2700 miles. He was now half way back to Lands End!! We also met an Aussie who had cycled from London with a broken wheel and was now about to set off back to Australia – via Ireland! It made us feel a bit humble.

The drizzle and cold wind meant that we didn't hang around too long having our pictures taken. We paid the obligatory sum to have the signpost put up for photographs and set off with a following wind.

Unfortunately after 200 yards there is a sharp right turn to Thurso and the wind was then in our face. The sun came out however and we had a very pleasant 20 mile ride through the back lanes to Thurso with views across to the Queen Mother's Castle of Mey. Our first 2 days would be along the North coast and we would not turn South until we reached Bettyhill. We chose this route to avoid heavy traffic on the A9/A99 and also to see the beautiful and remote areas of the Northern Scottish coast and highlands.



Pentland Lodge

The Pentland Lodge B&B in Thurso took a bit of finding and there was a downpour while we were looking for it but when we arrived it was extremely well appointed and comfortable.

We had a nice meal in the bar at the Holborn hotel where we watched England beat Mexico 3-1 in a friendly.

### ***We're Off!***

*We finally arrived at JOG at midday in the rain. The journey up here went without a hitch. The Caledonian Sleeper to Inverness was comfortable. The only concern was when the train was split at Edinburgh and we hoped we were going to the same place as our bikes! Luckily both bikes and riders arrived on time at Inverness where we were met by van driver Kyle for onward transfer to JOG.*

*At JOG we had lunch with a guy who was 2700 miles through his coastal circumnavigation of UK and another who had cycled from London and was now setting off back home - to Australia!! And we thought our challenge was impressive.*

*One thing the journey up here has taught us is how far we have to cycle back.*

*Anyway, after the obligatory photos we set off for Thurso - a fairly modest 20 miles. There was a freezing headwind but the sun came out and we had an enjoyable ride down quiet and scenic back lanes.*

*We had some difficulty locating our B&B and got caught in a shower.*

*Tomorrow we have a rather hilly 30 miles to Bettyhill.*

*Peter*

### ***Incarceration***

*Hello, this is the Jane half of the team. Well we've finally started. Buffy has been packed off to the cattery where she will probably spend the next three weeks pacing up and down with her baseball and glove whistling that irritating tune and trying to figure out how to get under the wire and onto the motorbike.*

*We headed off on a tar meltingly hot day to Euston for the sleeper. We had a couple of beers and sat in the shade in Euston square gardens, in Pete's case under the flight path of an incontinent crow.*

*The sleeper bunk was a bit like sleeping in an M R I scanner, claustrophobic noisy. but without the soothing radio2 on the headphones.*

*John O' Groats, ancient Norse for Arse end O' Nowhere, was full of interesting characters arriving and departing on various heroic missions. Took the obligatory photos and have at last done the first day. Just off to seek out the nightlife of Thurso.*

## Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2010 – Thurso to Bettyhill 30 miles

We left Thurso on a chilly morning with blue skies and a brisk North Westerly wind. The very friendly landlady at Pentland Lodge gave us a donation for Macmillan. The first two days along the North Coast would only take us a total of 50 miles which would give our legs a chance to get acclimatised. Today's ride was 30 miles to Bettyhill but finished with a very hilly section.

We started out along back roads into the wind and enjoyed a sunny day. We passed the Dounreay reactor which seems to provide most of the employment in Thurso. There was a pleasant but very windy beach just past Dounreay with nice dunes.



Dounreay reactor

Mid morning we were passed by a group of soldiers in Melvich who were doing JOGLE in 8 days. They had 2 support vehicles and had left JOG that morning. Their target for the first day was Altnahara which we would not be reaching until our third day! However they were under half our age and were not carrying any luggage. They were also on lightweight carbon racing bikes. Despite that we caught up with them later when they were having their lunch.

Lunch – that would have been nice. We hadn't brought anything with us and had assumed that there would be regular coffee shops & pubs along the way. This is Northern Scotland however and we tried a number of likely looking establishments all of which were closed Monday – Wednesday! The owner of the Strathy Inn however interrupted his DIY and opened up specially to give us a cup of coffee and a bag of peanuts which was our lunch for the day. He asked us where we were headed and when told, he described Bettyhill as “the big smoke” so we expected to find a large range of quality restaurants when we got there.

The section of road after Melvich was hilly but there was little traffic and the scenery was beautiful.

Despite the headwind we made good time and arrived in Bettyhill mid-afternoon.



Our accommodation in Bettyhill was The Farr Bay Inn which on first appearance didn't look like any Inn we had ever seen. It had a small bar and a comfortable room and was a short walk from one of the amazing beaches that surround Bettyhill. It was located on the way into the village and just before a steep hill up to the village centre. We decided to explore the *big smoke* and quickly discovered that it consisted of our

establishment, a village shop, a very run down hotel in an amazing position but looking like something out of a Stephen King novel and the most amazing beach we have ever seen. No cycle shops, no restaurants, no Tesco supermarkets etc. Later on we discussed the place with our landlady and learnt that there is actually an excellent school, a swimming pool and a museum which elevated it to the status of *small smoulder*.

The beach was notable by the fact that there was not a single footprint visible.

The views were amazing and we had the first of several memorable sunsets of the trip. On the way back to our B&B we found an alternative, less hilly, way to the village centre which we noted for the next day. We visited the museum which was located in an old church and had tea at a very good tearoom attached to the visitor centre.



The fantastic beach at Bettyhill

The museum was well worth a visit and centred around the “Highland Clearances” which decimated the local communities only 200 years ago. We were particularly impressed by the displays created by local schoolchildren.



Fortunately, as there was no alternative, the landlady at the Farr Bay Inn made us an excellent home made meal which we washed down with some local ale. We got talking to our fellow guest who turned out to be a paramedic on call for the ambulance service. Due to the remoteness of this area, there is no normal ambulance service and the emergency service is provided by two paramedic first responders one of whom lives in the village, and the other of

whom lodges at our inn. They cover an enormous area and our fellow guest spent most of the night out on two callouts to the same patient.

#### *One small step*

*Someone once said 'A journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step' and so we find ourselves here in Bettyhill 50 miles from John O' Groats with only 950 left to do.*

*It has been a really good day with mainly sunshine and only 1 brief shower. The cold wind persists and has been in our face all day.*

*Unfortunately no eating establishments seem to know about Monday or Tuesday up here so we never found anywhere for lunch. Although closed, the Strathy Inn took pity on us and made us coffee which, together with a bag of peanuts was our lunch.*

*We were passed by a group of soldiers doing JOGLE in just over a week. They were collecting for 'Help for heroes'. Despite the fact that they were on lightweight carbon fibre racers, were half our age and had 2 support vehicles carrying all their luggage we caught up with them again later but they soon sped off again.*

*Bettyhill has one of the most beautiful beaches we have ever seen (see picture) and an interesting museum about the Highland Clearances in 1820.*

*So far, our journey has taken us due west but tomorrow we start heading south at last. (Memo to self - take sandwiches!)*

### **Doom Rays**

*Jane blogging.*

*Once upon a time on a wild uninhabited and ruggedly beautiful stretch of the Caithness coast, someone thought 'What can we do to improve this place? I know, let's build a nuclear reactor.' Thus Dounreay came into being. Anyway they are now decommissioning it, and you can buy a commemorative mug in Thurso to mark the occasion. Yes really.*

*Apparently there is a doping scandal in cycling. I want to know what they are taking and how to get hold of it. Sadly with nothing stronger than battered deep fried haggis, weapons grade coffee and whatever is in the air from Dounreay we inched our way across the map to Bettyhill where there is a gobsmackingly beautiful beach and not much else.*

*Off to the bar now for a wee dram. One should always seek out locally sourced products. Jane*

## Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> May 2010 – Bettyhill to Bonar Bridge 55 miles

Today represented the *proper* start of our journey as we were to turn South for the first time and also do a full 50 mile ride. We stocked up with a picnic lunch at one of the two excellent shops in Bettyhill (Bettyhill seemed to have more facilities the more we explored it) and set off up the Strathnaver valley to Altnaharra. The road was a very pleasant gentle ascent up a pretty river valley. After a few miles we left the main road to Tongue and followed the B871. There was more traffic than we expected up this small road but after Syre where the road became the B873 it also turned into a very quiet single track road with passing places.



Syre church

There were a few isolated dwellings up the valley and much evidence of the Highland Clearances. At Syre there was a small church which was left open for travellers. We eventually reached Loch Naver and stopped for our picnic lunch on a rock beside the road. Unfortunately it decided to start raining at this point and after we set off again it got very cold and changed to hail.

When we reached Altnaharra we took refuge in the Ghillie's bar at the Altnaharra Hotel and had a nice warming cup of coffee and shortbread.

After Altnaharra the road continues to climb a little more steeply until the pass before the Crask Inn which is apparently the second most isolated pub in the UK. When we reached the pass we had climbed steadily for 30 miles which, although it was not steep, was quite tiring. Fortunately the next 20 miles were steadily downhill to Lairg.

At Lairg we took a minor road to the West side of the river Shin so we could visit the Shin Falls where we had heard there was a tearoom. Sadly we arrived just as the tearoom was closing but we were able to visit the falls which are famous for salmon leaping (they weren't today!)





It was only a few miles to Bonar Bridge, our destination for the day, and we arrived about 5.30pm. Our B&B was Kyle House which was an enormous house in an equally enormous garden and had apparently been the doctor's house in days gone by. Images of Tannochbrae, Dr Finlay and Janet came to mind.

We had a fantastic meal in a bistro restaurant called Cranag that we had spotted while cycling though earlier. It was an extremely high class establishment with really good food and run by a very friendly family who chatted to us as we were sadly their only customers.



Shin Falls

I was carrying an aerosol can of GT85 cycle lubricant in my pannier (a bit like WD40). Unfortunately I discovered a strong chemical smell when I opened the pannier and my spare cycling kit was soaked in oily lubricant and the can was empty. We made efforts to wash the kit but travel wash was not really up to the job of cleaning silicon moisture-repellent lubricant and the kit smelt strongly and felt oily for the next 10 days till we found a B&B with a proper washing machine. We were a little surprised that supposedly cycle-friendly B&Bs did not offer washing facilities. Definitely a missed opportunity!

#### *Up and Down*

*Hooray we are finally heading South. Only trouble is The Highlands that stand between us and our goal.*

*We left Bettyhill with a following wind and rode up the beautiful Strathnaver valley. It didn't look so beautiful in 1820 as this was the site of the notorious Highland clearances. Some walls from the original settlements are still visible by the road.*

*The road gradually climbs up to 900ft. This the first time I have ridden steadily uphill for 30 miles but thankfully it is a gentle gradient. We stopped for a picnic lunch (taking no risks today) and got caught in a hailstorm. After a reviving coffee at the Altnahara hotel we continue to the col and were rewarded by a 20 mile descent.*

*Sadly we arrived at the Shin Falls just as the tearoom was shutting but were able to look at the falls (see picture)*

*Unfortunately the weather forecast for tomorrow is for rain, hail, snow (!) And thunder.*

*Peter*

### Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> May 2010 –Bonar Bridge to Drumnadrochit 50 miles



Dornoch Firth

We woke up to hear that the weather forecast was predicting heavy rain and even hail and snow! However the sun was shining as we set off over the bridge and down the south side of Dornoch Firth. After 4 miles, we took the B9176 to Dingwall which started with a stiff 700ft climb up the side of the valley above the Firth however there were amazing views and the weather remained sunny.

As we descended to the Cromarty Firth we came to the A9 which we had driven up 3 days earlier with Kyle. We kept to the minor roads and had lunch at a café in Evanton. There was rather bizarre cycle route along the road into Evanton which kept crossing over the main road. It was totally



useless to us so we stuck to the main road. According to a lady in the café it is also not used by locals for the same reason and is a bit of a white elephant. Yet another example of how cycle route planners obviously don't ride bikes!

The ride along Cromarty Firth through Dingwall and on to Beaulieu was relatively flat and made us realise just how isolated we had been for the past 3 days. There were real shops and traffic. It was a bit of a shock to the system but we were at least level with Inverness again which felt like real progress. The weather remained mainly fine with a few isolated showers.



View over Dornoch Firth



along our route so far.

The Bridgend House B&B was very comfortable but the pale deep pile carpets seemed a bit unlike the other "Cyclists Welcome" establishments that we had stayed in. There were teddies on the bed that all had names. The owner told us that she was known as "Hyacinth" locally - we couldn't think why! However it was a very nice place to stay and as I "passed the test" and didn't ask her for sponsorship, she gave us a generous donation for MacMillan.



Bridgend House

#### **No sign of Nessie (yet!)**

*I have realised that I didn't say where we were last night. We stayed in Bonar Bridge and had an excellent meal at a Bistro called Crannag. The food was first class and the family who run it were very friendly.*

*I had a slight disaster yesterday as I discovered that an entire can of GT85 cycle lubricant had discharged itself in my pannier and all my spare cycle clothing was soaked and very strange-smelling.*

*Today's weather was not as bad as expected but we got caught in a couple of hailstorms. The chilly north wind is helping us. We had 2 big hills to get over but as we move South we are finding the traffic heavier and are seeing 'real' shops again.*

*We are now in Drumnadrochit on Loch Ness but no sign of monsters yet (apart from the one in the picture). We have covered 150 miles so far with 850 to go. Tomorrow we ride down the length of Loch Ness and the Great Glen to Fort William. I will have my camera at the ready in case we spot Nessie.*

*Peter*

#### **Disraeli Gears**

*Jane chatting. I have a problem with my rear gear. No not my trousers, that cog thing at the back of the bike. When I change gear it takes so long to whir and clunk into place that I've forgotten about it and my foot slips off the pedal and causes me great consternation. Must get it fixed.*

*Sometimes when we're bowling along, Pete will shout 'Big chain ring! '. Having established that this is not some imminent anatomical catastrophe, I've realised he wants me to change to top gear so I can continue pedalling downhill. Why on earth would I want to pedal downhill? Isn't that what gravity is for? I guess I haven't got the cycling gene.*

*Mind you only a few months ago I used to derail my chain every time I went out on the bike so I have improved a bit since then.  
More soon.*

*Jane*

## Friday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2010 –Drumnadrochit to Fort William 50 miles



We left Drumnadrochit heading along the North shore of Loch Ness. The Great Glen sounded really nice but the reality was a busy, noisy road full of lorries and buses. The scenery over Loch Ness was beautiful. The only Loch Ness Monster we saw was a horrendous factory on the South side across the lake. Cycling was reasonably flat and fast and we stopped at Invermoriston for coffee in a very nice cafe about 100yds up the A887. This was one of many Scottish establishments that we visited owned and run by English.

Next Stop was Fort Augustus with its very impressive flight of locks built by Thomas Telford and marking the start of the section of the Caledonian canal joining Loch Ness to Loch Oich. We wanted to cycle along the canal towpath but had a little difficulty establishing which bank to start off on. A lady in the Scottish Waterways office told us to take the Right bank and then swap over at the Bridge of Oich to go down the Left side of Loch Oich.

The 5 miles to Bridge of Oich was a pleasant ride alongside the canal on a stony towpath. However, when we crossed over to the other side at the bridge, our troubles started. The path quickly degenerated into a tangle of tree roots and mud. A mountain biker coming the other way looked at our tourers and advised us to go back. We therefore carried on along the A82 to the southern end of Loch Oich. At that point, the cycle path diverts up to the Right along a road saying “No Through Road”. In order to avoid the previous fiasco, we asked another cyclist who advised us once again that it was not suitable for us. I think in retrospect that we could have taken that route but we decided to take the A82 instead all the way to Fort William.

The weather had turned quite windy and drizzly and it wasn't a pleasant ride with fast traffic and lorries. There was also a climb. We stopped to offer assistance to a cyclist who had a puncture. He was on a fast road bike and his tyres were worn bald. He said that he had support coming from a few miles behind. As we expected him to pass us and we didn't see him again we wonder what



Caledonian Canal



happened to him. He was meant to be doing a combined JOGLE / Three Peaks Challenge and was hoping to climb Ben Nevis the following day.

Our climb brought us to the fantastically situated Commando Memorial just before Spean Bridge. It



Commando Memorial & Ben Nevis

has a spectacular view of Ben Nevis (or at least would have done if the clouds weren't covering it) It was very moving with all the personal mementoes left there by families and friends of Royal Marines lost in action.

The ride down to Spean Bridge was fast and the final 10 miles to Fort William would have been OK except for the absolute idiots on the roads. It was Friday night at 5pm and the traffic was horrendous. Jane had a very nasty experience when she heard a vehicle

coming up fast behind her which then went into a skid just behind her when he realised that he couldn't squeeze past as there was something coming the other way. She just pedalled like mad to try to keep out of trouble. It turned out to be a post van!

The last few miles into Fort William were much more pleasant due to a new cycle path which took us off the road. At Fort William we met some walkers who had just finished the West Highland Way and we took their pictures in front of the monument.

The Gowan Brae guest house was excellent and extremely good value with a wonderful view over Loch Linnhe.

At Fort William we had covered 200 miles of our route and we had therefore travelled the same distance as our Devon Coast to Coast training ride. From here we were entering new territory!

#### **(Not so) Great Glen**

*I was looking forward to the ride down the Great Glen from Loch Ness to Fort William but the reality did not really come up to expectation. The scenery is fantastic but the traffic was awful. The A82 is full of buses, lorries and idiot drivers. We tried the cycle route but it really was not nice on touring bikes as the surface was really rough. So we used the A82 the rest of the way which added on 5 miles. A bonus was that we passed the Commando memorial which has fantastic views of Ben Nevis. We are now in Fort William with over 200 miles under our belts and everything is going well.*

*Peter*

#### **Scotch myths**

*Jane blatherin' on. I am beginning to suspect this whole Nessie thing may be nobbut a myth. We cycled the length of Loch Ness today. Nothing doing. We lurked behind a gorse bush, for at least 5 minutes, cameras at the ready. Dead quiet and everything. No sign.*

*Otters and Eagles*

*No sign of them either. Pete did think he saw an eagle on day 2 but as he once thought a Pine Marten was a type of bird, he may not be an entirely reliable witness*

*Darkness*

*We haven't seen that either. We're usually crashed out by 10.30 and up about 7 and it's always light.*

*Scotch*

*It's a myth that Scotch is good for you. It isn't. Jane. Bye for now*



# Fort William to Annan 250 miles



## Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2010 – Fort William to Oban 47 miles

We set off South along the busy road out of Fort William in pleasant sunshine. I noticed a funny clicking noise coming from my gears and made a mental note to check it out in Oban where we knew there was a cycle shop. Today was a relatively short ride on mainly flat roads so we hoped to arrive early afternoon.



View of the western Isles

after the bridge at Ballachulish we departed from the normal JOGLE route by following the coast to Oban. Much of this section of the ride was easy cycling along newly created cycle routes with amazing views across to the

Most JOGLE riders using the Western route take the road via Glencoe to Loch Lomond and Glasgow but



western isles. The weather had become a bit changeable with some short sharp showers and we sheltered at the Creagan Inn where we had lunch with the most stunning views across Loch Creran.

After the rain stopped we continued South and I immediately noticed that the clicking noise from my gears had got much worse. As we were climbing a short hill through some trees I announced “*I think its my chain*” followed immediately by swearing as the chain broke.

The hill we were on was not good with a narrow verge and due to the damp conditions it was a breeding ground for the dreaded Scottish midge. While trying to fix the chain we were eaten alive



You can't see the midges in this picture!

and after about 15 minutes we gave up and pushed our bikes to the top of the hill. A short downhill section took us down to a small layby where we had another go at fixing the chain. The midges were just as bad but it was off the road and easier to see the problem. As we were still 8 miles from Oban there was no option but to fix it. After another 20 minutes of cussing and struggling with a rather inadequate chain tool, the link was finally removed and repaired. We set off again quite confident that the chain would now take us to Lands End.

We arrived in Oban 10 minutes before the cycle shop was due to close for the bank holiday weekend and just to be on the safe side we bought a spare chain and a proper chain tool.

Oban is a nice fishing port and the stepping-off point for the Western Isles using Calmac ferries. There is a paddle steamer called “The Waverley” that sails round the Western Isles but we met some people at our B&B who had spent a small fortune on their trip only to sail round in a fog.

The evening in Oban gave us another beautiful sunset. We ate in a curry house where we saw our first kilts – on a father and son who were so drunk that they could hardly finish their meal and the son spent most of the time in the toilet!



Oban sunset

#### ***A case of the Measles***

*It was a nice easy day today. 43 miles along the coast to Oban with spectacular scenery and a lovely flat road. There were some very smooth tarmac cycle paths which were a welcome relief from the poor road surface. Traffic much better than yesterday especially after Ballachulish.*

*As soon as we left Fort William I noticed an intermittent clicking noise coming from my rear cassette. This got steadily worse but as we were expecting to be in Oban by 3pm that left plenty of time to get it looked at by a bike shop on arrival.*

*15 miles from Oban my chain broke on a rather dangerous hill. I have never fixed a broken chain before 'in anger' so it was a big learning experience. After some struggling with a rather inadequate chain link tool we eventually got it fixed - but not before we had been eaten alive by the dreaded Scottish midges that surrounded us in swarms.*

*By the time we arrived in Oban (an hour late) we looked as though we had Measles.*



*Staying in a very nice B&B in Oban. This is an important landmark as we have now done over 250 miles and are over 1/4 of the way.*

*Peter*

***On the road in Scotland***

*Jane here - Most of the roads haven't been resurfaced since Macadam was a lad.*

*Those which have were constructed using the latest surface which comes pre primed with baby potholes, ready to expand into whoppers at the first sign of rain or frost, and were completed by the work experience boy on an off day.*

*There are some funny old vehicles around too. We both thought we were being followed by a huge lorry yesterday, when it eventually rumbled past in a cloud of noise and fumes it turned out to be an ancient Citroen Dyan. Haven't they heard of the scrappage scheme up here? Just off for a curry see you soon. J.*

**Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2010 – Oban to Lochgilphead 36 miles**

Thankfully another short day today and it was just as well that we had bought that chain yesterday as my chain broke again as we cycled up the steep drive out of our B&B. After replacing the chain, my hands were black and the landlady of last night's B&B kindly let us clean up before we started on our journey again. The Inverasdale B&B was one of many helpful establishments we met along the way. The pale beige capets were a bit of a worry to us with our oily hands but the room was very comfortable and the landlady, Mrs Ferguson, was very helpful.

The road south of Oban was considerably more hilly but very pretty. We stopped for lunch at The Cuilfail hotel at Kilmelford where the owners kindly gave us a donation for Macmillan.

We arrived at Lochgilphead to be greeted by flag-waving Anne & Peter Wells. Anne was Jane's best friend at school and happened to be staying on the Mull of Kintyre during our passage south.

It was really nice to meet old friends and bore them with all our stories. Amazingly they had actually been reading our blog and had heard all the stories already! We were staying in a B&B with a fantastic view to Arran where we were heading the following day. The Corran B&B is an old house with an

enormous garden full of all manner of birds. We had a lovely evening drinking champagne (supplied by Anne and Peter) in the garden before heading off to a meal kindly paid for by Anne and Peter. Many thanks both!



**Anne & two Peters**

***Reunion on the Mull of Kintyre***

*Oban is a nice port on the West coast and gave us an amazing sunset last night.*

*We set off shortly after 9am but got no further than the drive of our B&B before my chain broke again! Luckily I had bought a spare chain yesterday but it took a little time to fix as it needed to be shortened.*

*The coast road South of Oban is beautiful with a couple of serious hill climbs.*

*One thing that has touched us during this trip is the generosity of people we have met along the way. We have had generous donations for our charity from landladies as well as random passers-by that we have met.*

*When we arrived in Lochgilphead we were met by a schoolfriend of Jane, Anne and her husband Peter who welcomed us with waving flags and champagne. We had a lovely meal and gossip in a local pub.*

*We have now completed almost 1/3 of our journey. Tomorrow we get to Arran.*

*Peter*

#### **Old Friends**

*Jane's Blog - Yesterday we bowled into Lochgilphead to be met by my old school friend Anne Wells (Shepherd) and her husband Peter. They were good enough to give us a hug even though we smelled of an alluring mixture of sweat, midge repellent and GT85. They waited patiently while we changed out of the double cycling pants combo, the sartorial equivalent of Huggies, never a good look, then plied us with Champagne and treated us to supper at the Argyll Inn. We dined on Loch Fyne mussels, swapped travellers tales and made a drunken vow to cycle Big Sur!*

*Thanks Anne and Peter you are stars. (Loved the car by the way, very Thelma and Louise.)*

*Jane*

### Monday 31<sup>st</sup> May 2010 – Lochgilphead to Arran 38 miles

Today was the start of our second week. The road from Lochgilphead runs along the side of Loch Fyne and is roughly level with Glasgow. This was one of the reasons for taking the scenic and rather hilly route down the Mull of Kintyre as it provided a useful way of bypassing Glasgow.

We had originally planned to stay at Tarbert, about 15 miles south of Lochgilphead but when we tried to book it 5 months before the trip, all accommodation was full because of a large regatta in town. We therefore had stopped at Lochgilphead which in the event proved a good choice because Tarbert was rather disappointing. The regatta meant that there was a rather intrusive loudspeaker continuously announcing results and it was far from a haven of peace. The coffee shop where we stopped for refreshments was very pleasant and the people friendly.

After Tarbert there is a short sharp climb over the headland and a descent down to the ferry to Arran. The ferry "terminal" was like a bus shelter with no facilities of any sort. The view was lovely however and the sun was actually feeling quite warm. We must be moving south! The ferry is a short hop over to Lochranza and when we arrived it was really hot! By co-incidence, our daughter Ali and her boyfriend Scott were camping in Lochranza but were walking on the fells when we landed.



The road south of Lochgilphead



Tarbert



Arran in the distance



Arran was so quiet after the mainland. It seemed really old fashioned with virtually no traffic. After lunch at a pub we headed off to Brodick where we were to stay. Passing between the Arran malt whisky distillery and the campsite where Ali and Scott were staying we headed up Glen Chalmadale and the steep climb over the pass which led us down again to the road to Brodick.

At Brodick we investigated the ferry terminal to check the time of our crossing back to the mainland the following day and after tea at a local café we headed up the steep hill towards Carrick House B&B.

As I overtook another cyclist on the hill a car behind me hooted and I swore at the inconsiderate and impatient driver – only to find that it was Ali & Scott who had come down off the mountain after a day's walking to meet us.

In the evening we took Ali & Scott out for a meal. There is not an awful lot of choice in Brodick but we rejected the best restaurant (after Ali said it was too expensive) and ended up at the worst! It was a chinese restaurant which was empty apart from one other family. After consulting their booking diary they eventually decided that they could accommodate us.

Service was not fast! Half our meal arrived but when I enquired about where the rest was I was told in no uncertain terms that the food would appear as soon as the cook had prepared it (as they were so busy)! After another long wait we noticed a kerfuffle at the other occupied table where it appeared that our food had been served. The waitress helpfully said that they would re-cook it rather than just serve the half eaten food but we had had enough and left.

Scott was still hungry so we bought him a plate of chips in another establishment where we were told that the waitress's friend had got food poisoning in the Chinese restaurant the previous week. I embarrassed everyone as we left by announcing to the waitress (and to the entire restaurant clientele) that we hadn't yet got food poisoning!

We bought a packet of Imodium from a supermarket on the way back to our B&B.

#### **Arran**

*What a good decision it was to come via Arran. OK it was a little hilly but the scenery is fantastic. We got a further £24 in donations today.*

*The short ferry crossing to Arran took us to a different world - so quiet.*

*Met up with Ali and Scott and had a rather bizarre chinese meal in what must be the worst and most chaotic restaurant we have eaten in. The staff gave half our meal to the wrong table and then blamed this on the fact that they were so busy (only 3*

*tables occupied). When we told someone in another bar about this we were cheerily told that her friend got food poisoning there last week.*

*Bought a packet of Imodium on the way back!*

*We have now done 350 miles and are South of Glasgow. Back to the mainland in the morning then head for Dumfries. Only 2 more days in Scotland.*

*Peter*

## Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010 – Brodick to KirkConnel 46 miles

We awoke to find that it had been raining most of the night and was still chucking it down. Jane was being driven mad by midge bites and took an antihistamine. We had to set off early to catch the ferry back to Ardrossan on the mainland. Unlike the small ferry at Lochranza, this was a large vessel – more like a cross-channel ferry. We had to wait in the pouring rain while the cars were loaded and then had to follow them onto the car deck via the loading ramp.



Ferry back to the mainland

We were therefore feeling a bit miserable and to add to it, Jane's antihistamine had kicked in and she was feeling distinctly strange. The crossing was shrouded in mist and driving rain and Ardrossan was a bit depressing when we arrived.

Shortly after setting off in the rain, I stopped and was promptly run into by Jane causing some damage to both bikes, fortunately repairable using the tools to hand. After that, things gradually improved as the rain eased off and we gradually climbed on easy roads to cross the Southern Uplands, heading towards Kirkconnel.

On the way we stopped to buy some lunch at a shop in Tarbolton. As we sat in a bus shelter out of the rain, we realised that we were sitting opposite a National Trust property called "The Batchelors Club". Needing somewhere to warm up out of the rain we pulled out our NT cards and knocked on the door. The bachelors club is a 17<sup>th</sup> century thatched cottage where Robert Burns and his friends formed a debating club in 1780. It was fascinating and reawakened my interest in Robbie Burns ever since I was roped into delivering "The Immortal Memory" speech at a Great Alne Burns Night some years before. The curator was really pleased to tell us all about the bard and also gave us a donation to MacMillan.

The weather improved in the afternoon and the sun actually came out. As we gradually climbed onto the Southern Uplands we noticed a lot of large lorries. These turned out to be coming from an enormous open cast coalmine which was a dreadful scar on the landscape. We passed through a series of very poor-looking villages which housed mineworkers. One of these, New Cumnock, was the site of a pit disaster in 1950 where 116 miners were rescued and 13 lost their lives. A few miles further on we eventually arrived at our B&B Rigg House in Kirkconnel.



We had opted for an evening meal at Rigg House which was just as well as there wasn't anywhere else to eat! The food was plentiful, home cooked and delicious. After eating out in pubs, restaurants & cafes for over a week, it was nice to eat proper food again.

A fellow guest took me for a ride in his car up onto the hills nearby to look for deer. He was a regular there and stayed to do deerstalking which was perhaps why there were none around that day.



#### **Burns country**

*When I planned this route I didn't realise how many interesting places we would pass through. One of these was today when we were riding through a rather ordinary village called Tarbolton. We stopped at the village store to buy lunch and saw a National Trust property across the road. It turned out to be the house that Robbie Burns used to meet his mates to put the world to rights. They called themselves The Batchelors Club which bore more than a passing resemblance to GAGA (that's the Great Alne Gentlemens Association for those of you who are wondering).*

*Today did not start well. The weather was very wet and 100 yards after getting off the ferry from Arran, Jane ran into the back of me causing a little damage to both bikes. Fortunately it was repairable.*

*After lunch the weather improved but it was quite a tiring day. We are now at Kirkconnel which is a rather run-down mining community. The scenery however is beautiful.*

*Tomorrow is our last day in Scotland and we will soon be half way to Lands End.*

*Peter*

#### **False Summits**

*Jane here.*

*Peter has kindly provided a map for each day with a squiggly green line at the top. This proves to be a profile of the contours of the day's ride. Good. I thought it was a particularly ominous ECG printout. (Especially the flat bit along the bottom, but that was the ferry ride.)*

*So I come puffing up to join Pete at a hill, and the conversation goes something like this:*

*Me. Are we at the summit yet?*

*Pete. Look at your profile. We're just at that little nippy bit before the shoulder leading to the plateau before that lump where it flattens out then dips a bit before the final pull to the top. Then there's a couple more like that today but a bit higher, and then we're done*

*Me. So that's a no then*

*Pete. (Incredulously) You can't possibly think this is steep?.*

*Me. (In a small but brave voice) Spose not.....*

*But he's gone in a cloud of dust and GT 85.*

*J.*

### **Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2010 – KirkConnel to Annan 51 miles**

Thankfully the weather had improved again and we set off in the sunshine with a following wind. The 30 miles to Dumfries was largely downhill and after starting off down some minor roads we soon changed to the main A76 road which was reasonably quiet and we made very good time following the River Nith. The town of Thornhill was a convenient place to stop for coffee and we observed how well-to-do the town appeared compared with the other places we had passed in the previous 24 hours. A lady in a shop told us that it is because the town is owned by the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensberry who lives at Drumlanrig Castle just up the road.



Continuing along the Nith Valley we arrived at Dumfries in time for lunch. Dumfries looked a bit neglected with lots of empty shops and an air of recession about it. There is a rather splendid statue of Robbie Burns however which got me going again! We resisted the temptation to visit the Burns museum (must go back – P) and continued to Annan.

We had now reached the Solway Firth, the southern coast of Scotland and were only 10 miles from the English border.

Across the water we could see the fells of Northern Cumbria which we were due to climb the next day.



Robbie Burns Statue in Dumfries

The TV news was full of the story of the Whitehaven shootings which had happened that very day. It was weird thinking that this was happening just across the water from where we were as we were looking at it.

#### **Burned out**

*This Robbie Burns chap is everywhere. We seem to have been following the Burns Heritage Trail and when I suggested to Jane that we might come back and visit some of the museums a sort of glazed look came over her face. We are now in Annan and even the local chippy has a plaque commemorating the poem he wrote there (honestly!)*

*Those of you who heard my 'Immortal Memory' address at the Burns night we had in Great Alne a few years ago will remember that his death was hastened by being immersed in the Solway Firth by his doctor. That is where we now are having traversed Scotland from its North Coast to its South Coast. The hills we can see across the water are the Cumbrian Fells. (Don't tell Jane but we are crossing those tomorrow).*

*It's been a fantastic day with lovely weather and we feel great. Now it's just a small matter of getting across England.*

*Peter*

#### **Bonking**

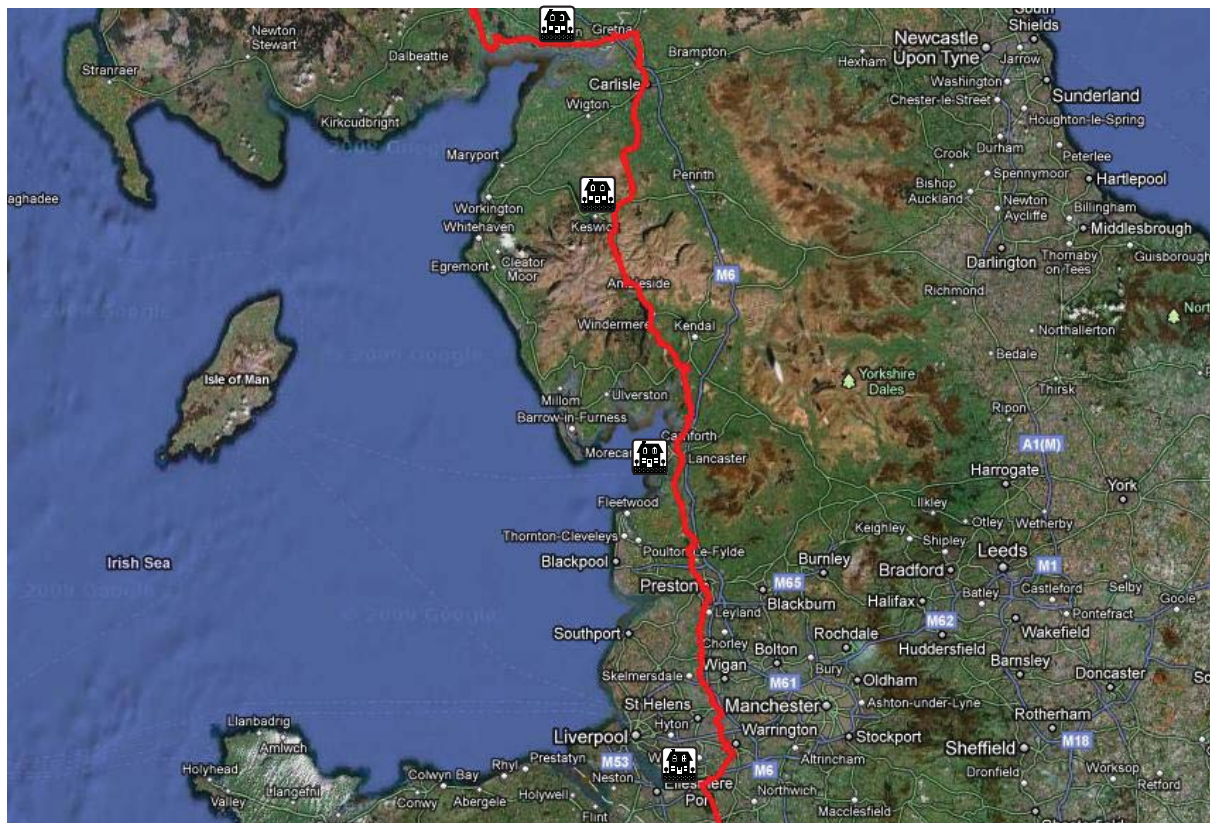
*Jane nattering*

*In cycling circles the verb to Bonk has a completely different meaning from that with which you may already be familiar. It means to completely run out of steam, to be absolutely exhausted and lacking all physical and mental motivation, like a marathon runner hitting 'the wall', in short to be like the England football team in an international friendly against a Restofthethirdworld under 16 girls B team. I was like that yesterday. I blame it on the pill I took to stop the itching from the midge bites from the chain incident. It's surprising, the restorative effect a home made supper courtesy of Rigg house B and B with Fresh Green Veg and 12 hours sleep can have. Today was different. Today I could laugh at the mountains. (As in I could look at the mountain, laugh, and say 'We're not going up that are we? Are we?') I think I've now got this sports nutrition thing sussed. Lots and often. Ha ha, no more bonking for me this trip.*

*Anyway the weather has now improved so much we can shed our bright yellow midge-magnet waterproofs which seem to attract every man eating bug in the northern hemisphere.*

*Jane*

# Annan to the Mersey 170 miles



Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2010 – Annan to Threlkeld 46 miles



10 miles from Annan is the town of Gretna and we couldn't resist a small detour to Gretna Green to see the famous Blacksmiths Forge where so many runaway lovers headed. There are in fact 6 Blacksmith Forges – all claiming to be the original and best. We headed for the most touristy one and saw our first fully kilted bagpiper. It was all rather tacky but quite interesting.

About a mile south of Gretna is the English border. It's really a bit of a disappointment with a rather tired-looking sign but there is a helpfully placed layby where we could take our pictures by the sign.

We had been told by the landlord at the B&B in Annan that there is an unmarked road that runs alongside the M6/A74.



This isn't shown on any maps and there are no road signs but having faith in our host we set off along a small service road that was fantastic and saved us quite a lot of time. A local cyclist told us that it was a secret known only to locals and was actually a service road built to support the recently upgraded A74.

Carlisle was a pleasant surprise. The warm sunshine gave it a continental feel with restaurants spilling out onto the pavements. After lunch we set off toward the Lake District.

We were heading for Threlkeld but approached from the North, an area we were not familiar with. It was quite a climb up to 1000 feet through Hesketh Newmarket with views back across the Solway Firth towards southern Scotland. In Hesketh Newmarket we met a cyclist who was an elite Triathlete – with a bike to match. I was drooling over his lightweight carbon machine which weighed less than the 10Kg of luggage we were each carrying on our heavyweight touring bikes!



Hesketh Newmarket and the northern side of the Lakeland Fells

From Hesketh Newmarket the road continued to climb quite steeply but eventually opened up onto Mungrisdale Common. This is a beautiful open area crossed by a winding road with wild horses wandering around.

At Mungrisdale, we joined the Coast to Coast cycle route heading west for 5 miles to Threlkeld. I had last cycled this section in the opposite direction 3 years earlier when doing the Coast to Coast with my friend Bob. We met several Coast2coasters along this section who had left Whitehaven that morning – the day after the shootings!



The Hollies B&B

The Hollies B&B in Threlkeld was lovely with a very friendly landlady who offered to do some washing for us. Unfortunately a pair of Jane's cycling pants fell off the line and got lost. The sun was shining, we were in the Lake District and most importantly, this was the half-way point of our journey!

#### **Lakeland Falls**

*Jane only fell 3 times today which is quite an improvement. Of course it is my fault as I have set her saddle too high.*

*The first fall was rather spectacularly into a flowerbed at the Gretna Green blacksmith's forge - much to the amusement of the staff in the gift shop. I managed to record this on video and fortunately no injury resulted.*

*Gretna Green was as naff as expected but was a Must-See as the hoardes of Japanese and American tourists also thought. At £850 for a wedding it seemed quite a bargain. For a mere £30 you can also have a (non-legal) exchange of rings.*

*A mile or so south lies the English border with a rather unimpressive sign considering the effort expended to get there*



*Carlisle was better than expected but then started THE CLIMB. 1026 ft to be precise, on the hottest day of the year, but it was through the most beautiful countryside. The charming village of Hesket Newmarket has a village shop/tea room and a community pub frequented by Prince Charles (Great Alne please note)*

*We are now in Threlkeld feeling a bit smug when we meet cyclists who are ONLY doing the Coast to Coast.*

*The Lakes have never looked better*

*Peter*

*J*

*Jane here*

*Pete is a genius at all this techie stuff but has great difficulty distinguishing his right from his left. This can lead to some interesting situations at junctions.*

*Picture the scene. I'm in front.*

*Me 'Which way?'*

*Him 'Right' (I point to the right with my thumb, just to check)*

*Him 'No, right'*

*Me 'That is right'*

*Him 'Left then'*

*Me 'Alright'*

*Him 'No left'*

*Good grief*

*Or at a T junction. Right or left I say. Straight on. I can't it's a river. Just follow the road round that way....So he goes ahead to show the way.*

*A half mile gap opens up and I finally catch up at a field gate, his bike is tossed carelessly in a bed of nettles, wheel still spinning, his head visible over the hedge. From this I deduce that he has taken the opportunity to go for an al fresco pee. At this point I see the farmer come tanking down the lane on his quad bike. At the same time an elderly lady with a poodle is approaching from the opposite direction. 'Best get a move on' I shout. 'I can't rush these things' he says. This has happened so often we now have no shame.*

*Sometimes in these fields there will be a sign up along the lines of 'Proudly growing British wheat for The Acme Bread Company' or some such.*

*Memo to self: Avoid Acme thick sliced for the next year or so. J.*

## Friday 4<sup>th</sup> June 2010 – Threlkeld to Lancaster 46 miles

The sun was still shining the following morning as we set off. (is this a record for Cumbria?) A lovely ride up St Johns in the Vale and as we crossed over the main road to take the road round the back of Thirlmere we met Scott's dad, Dave. He lives in South Cumbria and had guessed where he could meet us – and he was right. This was a very pleasant surprise and Dave stayed with us until we were south of Windermere.

We had to join the busy A591 through Grasmere, Ambleside and Windermere where we stopped for a picnic before Dave left us and we continued towards Lancaster. The busy A590 road links the southern lakes to the M6. When we reached it, the expected crossing and minor road alternative didn't seem to exist so we ended up having to cycle about ½ mile along the A590 – scary!

After we left the main road at Levens Bridge we found Ali & Scott waiting for us having just driven back from Arran. It had



St Johns in the Vale



Peter & Dave beside Thirlmere



taken them 3 hours to do what had taken us 3 days! After refreshments at a local pub, we decided to take the direct route via the A6 to Lancaster because we were running behind schedule.

Usually we would phone through to B&Bs a few days before our arrival to confirm the booking and check there were no problems. On this occasion we had not done so and as we were still 10 miles away at 5pm I phoned ahead to tell the B&B that we would arrive later than expected. There was a slight pause on the phone followed by the statement that we would be staying in the annexe up the road. This was a little surprising since we had booked it 4 months before.

It took a little time to find the B&B and on arrival we were told that our room had a plumbing problem and we had been relocated about ¼ mile further out of town. This was not quite what we had planned as we had chosen the B&B because of its location within walking distance of the town. The so-called “annexe” turned out to be a converted garage attached to a house which smelled of damp. We were told that there was a welcome pack in the fridge which turned out to be a half used bottle of milk, some out-of-date yoghurt and one mini pack of cocoa pops. We were told breakfast would be delivered to us at 8am.



“4 star” breakfast at the Old Station House

We walked the extra distance into town and had a pleasant Italian meal. The following morning our “breakfast” was delivered which consisted of 2 bacon baps. my protest that this did not come up to the promised 4 star quality fell on deaf ears and to avoid an unpleasant scene we paid up and set off early. We won’t be going back and suitable comments have been placed on *Trip Adviser*!!

#### *Cumbria*

*I have been told off by Rob (who organises the Stratford MacRide) for not showing our MacRide jerseys in the blog photos. Today's picture is for Rob. We have been wearing them, honest, but they were sometimes covered up on account of the cold Scottish weather.*

*Threlkeld was delightful and we set off in beautiful sunny weather. After 5 miles our route took us round the back of Thirlmere and we were surprised to find Scott's dad, Dave, waiting for us on his bike. He cycled with us for the rest of the day through Ambleside and Windermere - most welcome - thanks Dave.*

*Shortly after Dave left us we found Ali & Scott waiting for us en-route back from Arran. We had a nice tea-time stop with them.*

*I have observed over the past few days that 1 day's cycling equates to 1 hour's driving and this was confirmed when Ali told us that they had only taken 3 hours to get back from Arran.*

*We are now in Lancaster in by far the worst B&B of the trip. It is meant to be 4 star but we have been sent 500 yards down the road to their "annexe" which is a converted garage smelling of damp. We have been told they will deliver bacon sandwiches for our breakfast. Stand by for some interesting haggling over price tomorrow!*

*Tomorrow is a long ride to Frodsham where we will have a rest day.*

*Peter*

#### **Half Way There**

*Jane here*

*I was misled about the size of Scotland. I blame it on that ridiculously Londoncentric weather map the BBC used to show a couple of years ago, which showed the southeast of England taking up about 90 per cent of the tv screen with Scotland relegated to an insignificant blob at the top under a grey cloud. Then the Scots rightly objected and some degree of proportion was restored. Well it's still deceptive. Scotland is about fifty per cent of the length of GB. I thought after a few hours riding we'd*

*be at Carlisle and then the ride would really start. Happily though, when you get to Cumbria you are half way there! So here we are now in England. Good. I can now safely pimp my bike with some of that England football merchandise. There was very little mention of the World Cup north of the border. Funny that. Jane*

## Saturday 5th June 2010 –Lancaster to Frodsham 70 miles

This was to be our longest day but we were due to have a rest day with Jane's Dad in Frodsham on Sunday. The route looked fairly flat apart from some hills at Appley Bridge. We set off at 8.15am and tried to buy some new pants for Jane at a cycle shop that was just opening but he couldn't serve us as "the till was not open". Oh well – a lost sale there!

The day was promising to be very hot so we drank plenty of fluid and covered ourselves with factor 50 sunscreen.

We reached Garstang in time for coffee. My Mother had lived in Garstang during her childhood so we tried to find a postcard to send her. Our search brought us to the tourist office where we bought a "pictorial history of Lancaster" as a present which we posted back to ourselves at home.

Getting through Towns and Cities is always a problem by bike and Preston didn't disappoint! The route we had chosen took us across the river on a bridge that was closed for safety reasons. After a detour through the very pleasant park by the river we were shown an alternative route by a friendly native.

After crossing the river, we got lost again! GPS navigation is fine for the broader picture but the fine detail inside towns gets easily confused. We eventually got back on the right road and started making good progress south.

The "hills" at Appley Bridge turned out to be extremely steep (15%) and we had to walk a short distance. The afternoon was extremely hot but despite this we made good progress. It was surprising how rural our route remained right into Warrington.

We had chosen to avoid the Runcorn Bridge as our Mersey Crossing and instead chose a series of cycle paths through Sankey Bridges following a cycle path rather inappropriately called the Trans-Pennine Trail. We finally crossed the Mersey doing impressions of Jerry & The Pacemakers while keeping an eye open for needles, Rottweilers and drug dealers.

The final few miles to Frodsham seemed interminable but the promise of a curry kept us going.

We arrived at Jane's dad's house at 7pm making this our longest and most exhausting day so far. We had 1 hour to get ready to go out for our curry with Helen and her husband John. Helen was another of Jane's schoolfriends.

With a rest day beckoning the following day, we let our hair down a little and drank rather more than was wise including a bottle of champagne provided by Helen & John!



*Sblogshed*

*Met up with Helen another old schoolfriend. Too blogged to slosh.. Jane*

## Sunday 6th June 2010 – Rest Day at Frodsham

After cycling every day for almost 2 weeks, it was very welcome to have a day off. This allowed us to do some proper laundry as well as make a shopping trip to Chester by train. The bikes seemed to be in good shape and no maintenance was required. The same could not be said for our bodies!



### **Rest Day**

*As you may have guessed that last Blog came from Jane after we got back from a nice meal with Helen & John last night. Thanks for the champagne Helen but Jane is feeling slightly precious this morning!*

*Yesterday was a long ride from Lancaster to Frodsham - over 70 miles after I had taken a wrong turn. For the most part it was flat but there are a couple of nasty hills at Appley Bridge.*

*It was incredibly hot but we managed to keep hydrated and arrived at Jane's Dad's in Frodsham at 7pm.*

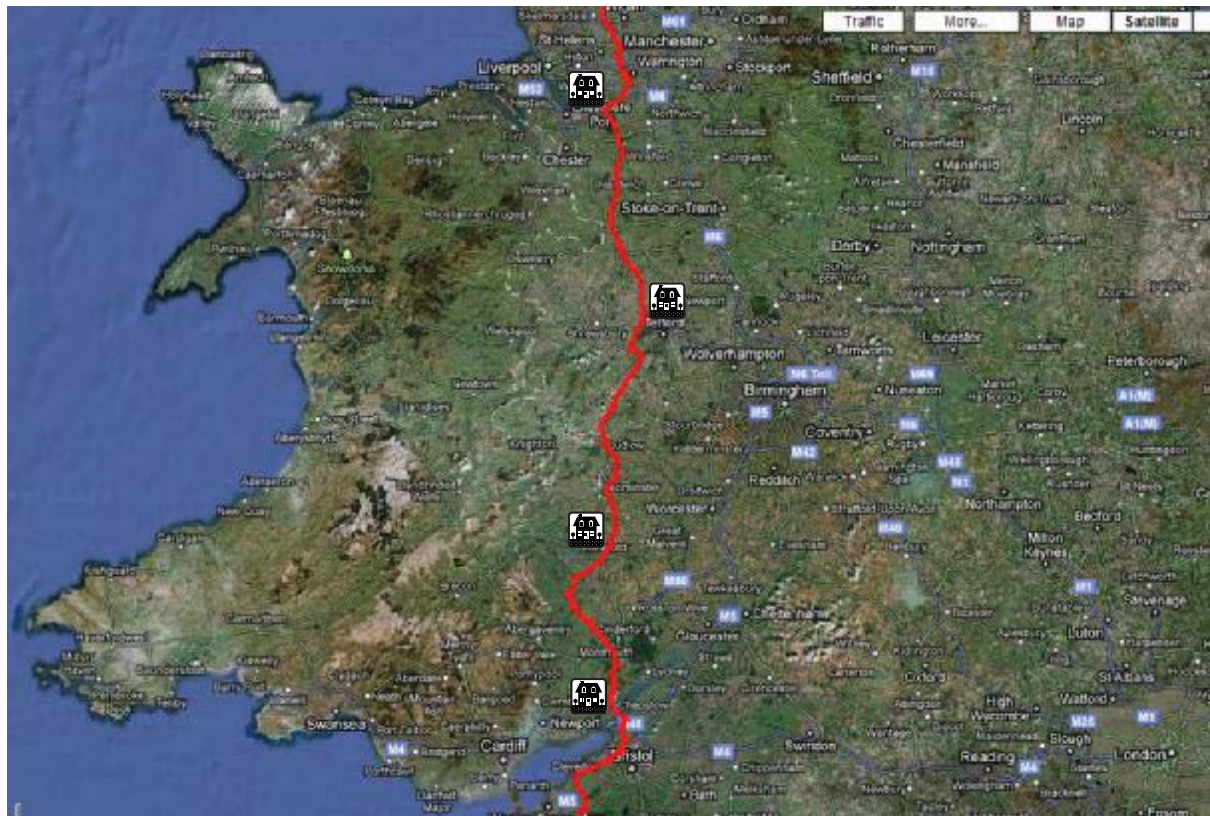
*The Mersey crossing route we chose worked well and we followed the Trans-Pennine trail through a network of cycle paths called Sankey Bridges. There were a few dodgy characters including an obvious drug dealer but we got through in one piece and it was definitely better than traffic.*

*These cycle network paths are all very well and good but have the designers ever ridden a bike? Every few hundred yards there was an obstruction designed to let bikes through but not motor bikes. Trouble is that Jane's 'Butterfly' handlebars wouldn't fit requiring a two-person effort to lift it through. The other bug-bear is those oversized kissing gates that are designed to let bikes through. They may work OK with kids mountain bikes but not with tourers/panniers (Sustrans please note)*

*Today is a day off and we will probably get the train to Chester to try and find Jane some new cycling pants (she left a pair in the Lake District).*

*Peter*

## Frodsham to Chepstow 160 miles



### Monday 7th June 2010 – Frodsham to Wrockwardine 47 miles

Today represents the start of the third week of our ride and we set off from Frodsham in fine weather but with the threat of thunderstorms later in the day. At Beeston we stopped at the *Flavours café* by the lock gates. The friendly staff gave us a jar-full of 5p coins that they had collected. They were very heavy but we changed them later and counted £5 for Macmillan.

Whitchurch was deserted – like a ghost town – which was a bit surprising since it was Monday. We had lunch at a black & white restaurant with the most amazing crooked walls and ceiling.



After lunch the weather started looking very threatening with big storms to both sides and ahead. Somehow or other we managed to stay dry as they skirted by us and we could see The Wrekin looming in the distance. I said that we were cycling over it and Jane hoped that I was joking!

Wrockwardine is only 5 miles from the centre of Telford but remains a quiet little village. We were staying at Church Farm Guest House which turned out be a very high quality establishment run by Mel and Martin who used to own a number of pubs and restaurants. Martin is an extremely good



chef with an AA award and cooked us an amazing meal. Jane was able to practice her Italian with a group of Italian guests sharing the accommodation.

Church Farm was one of many establishments that we stayed at with the *Cyclists Welcome* Marque. We tended to choose these where possible as they provided storage for bikes and were generally sympathetic to our needs as touring cyclists. Church Farm was one of several that actually stored our bikes in the hall which was a bit surprising.

#### **Off again**

*The rest day yesterday has done us good as we were off like rockets this morning and we covered today's 47 miles in record time. We are now in The Midlands staying on a farm near Telford. Almost the closest point to home. It's a very nice B&B and more than makes up for the dump we stayed in at Lancaster.*

*Fortunately we booked evening meal here as it turns out that Martin, our host has a rosette for his cooking.*

*Whitchurch is a strange town! I have cycled through it twice before, each time on a Sunday, so I expected nothing to be open. However today is Monday and everything was still closed. Perhaps they have their Bank Holidays a week late in these parts.*

*Today's weather forecast was dreadful but we have been very lucky with only a few spots of rain. There were several large storms that passed us by on either side. I took credit for my skilful GPS routing between the storms but Jane wasn't convinced!*

*Peter*

#### **Pants**

*Jane here.*

*I wish to correct any erroneous impression which Peter may have given by his statement that I had left my pants in the Lake district. They were not lost behind a gorse bush, fallen off on a fell or even strung up, trophy style, from a flagpole in Keswick. It was nothing to do with any rural shenanigans or pastoral hanky panky. No the truth is much more boring. They got left behind at a B and B where they got left behind after drying. I'll probably never get them back as they are now probably home to a cat a cockerell and a family of fieldmice.*

*Of course these are not just any old pants. They are a highly technical piece of kit. Lycra engineering, hamstring durch technik and all that. The only solution was to go for a bit of retail therapy in Chester on our day off. I was greatly restored after this but Pete didn't think it was much of a day off. Anyway back on the road again today fully kitted out again and continuing our inexorable advance on our target. More soon. Jane*

## Tuesday 8th June 2010 –Wrockwardine to Hereford 54 miles

When we got up it was raining so we set off in full wet-weather kit after having our picture taken by Mel. It was really wet and the first 10 miles to Much Wenlock was quite a climb. In Much Wenlock we found a very nice café called *The Old Smoothie*. Whether this was named after the drinks or the owner we were not sure – probably both.

After Much Wenlock, the road continued to climb but then levelled out as the rain finally cleared

giving us a pleasant ride through Shropshire and Herefordshire down to Hereford. At Ludlow, we met an end2ender going North who warned us about the hills South of Hereford. A couple of showers during the afternoon ensured that we arrived at *The Holly Tree* in Hereford soaked through to the skin.

Some B&Bs have drying facilities. In Scotland it was generally cold enough for the central heating radiators to be hot. The Holly Tree had nothing so we had to resort to using the hairdrier to dry our clothes.

We expected Hereford to be a bit like Worcester but in reality it was absolutely dead in the evening with a very limited selection of places to eat. We eventually found an ASK pizza restaurant, one of the few places open..



Leaving Church Farm B&B

### **The Wrong Trousers**

*Jane has been 'Pimping her Ride'. First was the dead sheep draped over her saddle. She now sports a custom pair of England flags on the back of her bike. You may think that with the fluffy pink feathers it looks like a child's headband.*

*It is actually very useful when I follow behind her as it tells me what the weather is doing. If the pink fluffy bit is bedraggled and soggy then I know it is raining. If it is fluffy then I know it is fine. Today it is mostly soggy. Despite the appearance of the photo as we left Church Farm B&B in Wrockwardine it was chucking it down for most of the morning (that'll teach me for being smug yesterday).*



*We wore waterproof trousers. Mine are called Rainlegs and are brilliant. Janes were originally waterproof walking trousers but cut off at the knee. When she rides at any speed the wind blows them up so they look like one of those Sumo Wrestler suits when viewed from behind.*

*We stopped for lunch in Ludlow and in the afternoon the rain had eased off to a steady downpour.*

*In Ludlow an End2Ender with thighs the size of tree trunks warned us not to underestimate the serious hills between Hereford and Monmouth which cheered us up!*

*But that's for tomorrow. We are now in Hereford - home of the Mappa Mundi and not a lot else - with wet clothes and a B&B where the radiators don't work!*

*Peter*

### **Blazing Saddles**

*Jane wittering*

*Those of you lying awake at night worrying about how I'm going to keep my fluffy saddle cover dry in the unlikely event of rain will be relieved to know that I have managed to pilfer a shower cap from a B and B to cover it up. It looks Ridiculous. It has*

*mainly been used so far when the bike has been parked up, for example at a coffee bothy. Today though, I stepped outside and someone threw a bucket of cold water over me. I realised that this was rain of a most serious and wetting kind and it was clear that Full Waterproof Kit would have to be deployed. It could have been nasty though, plastic saddle cover, polyester waterproof trousers, all that lycra, if it hadn't been so wet there could have been an unfortunate case of spontaneous combustion.*

*Well the rain eased off to a steady downpour, the sky began to clear I started to dry out. my gloves dried, my socks were less squelchy, everything in fact except the double pant combo which was still saggy baggy and wet. When the sun eventually appeared, it actually got quite hot. Then I had a horrible thought. Ohmygod, what if I'm walking around genteel sedate Ludlow, and... my pants actually start Steaming?*

*P.S*

*We got separated at a T junction today. Miles from anywhere, very quiet and rural. I pinged my bell like mad and shouted very loudly 'which way?' A distant voice came from my right, 'LEFT'*

*Lordy*

*See you soon Jane*

## Wednesday 9th June 2010 – Hereford to Chepstow 43 miles

Putting wet clothes on again in the morning is not a pleasant experience. Mostly our tops and shorts were OK but shoes and socks were still wet. The weather looked OK however. We had thought about visiting the Mappa Mundi before leaving but it did not open till 10am so we didn't have time.

We could have taken the A49/A466 to Monmouth which was the most direct route but we chose to take a route involving minor roads to the West with views over towards Offa's Dyke. Just before Ewyas Harold we passed along a road with high fences either side. We then passed an entrance gate to an obvious but unsigned military establishment. This was the most open military secret in the country – ie the home of the SAS regiment. We were sure that the workmen in council uniforms



Skenfrith Church

across the road were actually armed soldiers. We stopped for coffee at the pub in Ewyas Harold and the locals regaled us with stories about the goings on at the base. Whether they are true or not they made interesting listening.

After crossing the river Monnow we found ourselves in Wales and kept crossing back and forth between England and Wales for the rest of the day. At the village of Skenfrith we stopped to visit the 13<sup>th</sup> century church with its amazing wooden tower. We were also told that the castle at Skenfrith featured in a recent Dr Who episode.

After Skenfrith, we hit the hills that our fellow end2ender in Ludlow had warned us about. He was referring to the main A road but the minor roads that we were on went up and down like a switchback. We were exhausted by the time we reached Monmouth where we had a picnic and a rest in a park.

The road from Monmouth to Chepstow was very pretty down the Wye Valley with easy cycling. One benefit of this road was that the bridges had a weight limit which meant that there were no heavy lorries.

After passing Tintern Abbey the road climbs steeply with amazing



Tintern Abbey

views across the Wye valley. We were able to see the Severn Bridge in the distance which we would be crossing the next day. After passing the Chepstow racecourse we made a final descent to Chepstow to stay at the *First Hurdle* guest house. We were delighted to find that there was a large boiler room with drying racks next to our room so our clothes finally dried out for the first time for 3 days. A lovely meal by the river Wye at *The Boat* inn finished off a good but tiring day.

#### **Wales**

*Hereford was a bit of a disappointment and decent eateries were hard to find. We ended up at an ASK pizza restaurant. We set off this morning with half our clothes still wet from yesterday. Fortunately the weather was kind to us and we soon dried out.*

*Today's route took us by back lanes (very hilly) to Monmouth and then down the Wye valley to Chepstow. Total distance 47 miles but with a knackering 5900 ft of total ascent.*

*The scenery was fantastic weaving in and out of Wales along the rivers Monnow and Wye and we passed some interesting places including a castle where they filmed a recent episode of Dr Who.*

*We met some interesting characters along the way including the regulars in the pub at Ewyas Harold who told us all about the goings on at the SAS base which we had just cycled past.*

*The landlord at 'The Sloop' pub in the Wye valley not only gave us a donation for Macmillan but also refused to accept payment for the tea and shortbread we had eaten - amazing, thanks.*

*At the end of the final climb into Chepstow we were rewarded by today's picture - a fantastic view of the river Wye with the Severn Bridge in the distance (tomorrow's target)*

*Just to finish today on a high our B&B has a drying room (we are easily pleased)*

*75% of our ride now completed - just the South West peninsula to do  
Peter*

#### **Wife Eye**

*Jane again*

*Peter has been planning this expedition for months and months. I don't know where he would have been without all this techie stuff though. Every night over the winter he was to be found, poring over his laptop, pausing only to watch Eastenders, muttering things like 'Now, when we get to (insert name of obscure county) I'm not sure whether to go by the A 1234 which will save us 3.76 miles but has a 1 in 8 hill, or the B5678, which is a bit longer, but only has a 1 in 12 hill, or cross the river there and... I know, I'll zoom in on Google earth and have a look what it looks like...'*

*Me Zzzzzzzzz*

*'WHAT DO YOU THINK JANEY?'*

*I jolt awake and answer perhaps a little too brightly, trying to pretend I was listening all along,*

*Err yep sounds good to me.*

*Which?*

*Erm the second one.*

*Mmm er yes, I think we'll go with the first one.*

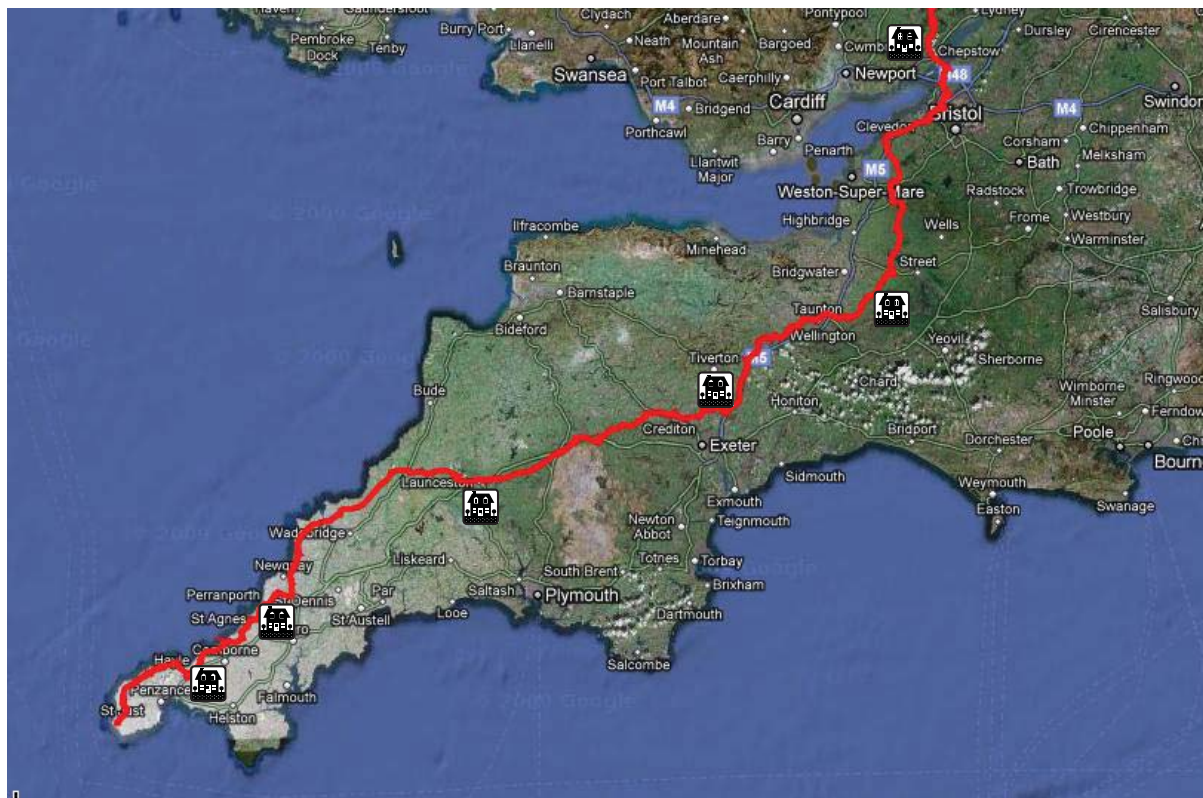
*Why did you ask me then? I say*

*Well it's nice to have your input in the decision making process.*

*More soon Jane.*



# Chepstow to Land's End 220 miles



## Thursday 10th June 2010 –Chepstow to Shapwick 51 miles

We had arranged to meet our friends Rob and Jon who had set off from Lands End a few days before on their LEJOG cycle ride. We had worked out that our paths would cross at the Severn Bridge so we set off early to meet them at Aust Services at the South end of the bridge at 9.30am.

There are good cycle paths on each side of the motorway as it passes over the bridge and we headed for the one on the Eastern side which passes directly into the services. Despite the fact that it was a major landmark in the area we had to ask the way to the bridge. There was a stiff north-easterly wind blowing from the side as we cycled the two miles over the bridge with amazing views of the new motorway bridge to the west.

When we arrived at Aust services there was no sign of Rob or Jon. A text message established that they were just crossing the motorway. *Which Motorway?* we asked ourselves. They didn't turn up for another 45 minutes having been held up by the wind that was blowing in their face. After coffee and cakes we had our photos taken by a fellow traveller who happened also to be doing the end to end but was on a rest day (at Aust



Severn Bridge



Meeting Rob & Jon at Aust Services

services!). We then headed off in opposite directions. As we passed over the motorway on a footbridge we saw Rob and Jon heading off North over the Severn Bridge into the wind.

We were very lucky to have the wind behind us and made good time along the minor roads and cycle paths to our next river crossing at the Avonmouth Bridge. Once again there is a good cycle path over this bridge. At the South end is the Gordano services that are accessible from the ordinary roads we were on. We had lunch at Gordano where a young family went specially to the cashpoint so they could give us a donation for Macmillan.

After Gordano the road runs parallel to and only about 100 metres from the split section of the M5 as it passes through the hills to Clevedon. It was amazing to think of the number of times we had driven along this section of the motorway without being aware of these quiet lanes off to the side.



Avonmouth Bridge

After Clevedon the route flattened out at the start of the Somerset Levels. The motorway however forced us to take the minor roads to the East and our route took us over a small ridge of the Mendips just North of Cheddar. Cheddar itself was a bit of a disappointment and we couldn't find a

tea shop which was surprising. After Cheddar however we were back on the Somerset Levels again and the last 10 miles were pleasantly flat and fast. Just before we arrived at Shapwick we passed through a nature reserve which is well known for its swarms of flocking starlings in the autumn.



Shapwick is a small village where we found our B&B to be a delightful cottage owned by a lady who told us that her son was married to Emily Eavis of Glastonbury Festival fame.

There was nowhere to eat in Shapwick so we had to get back on our bikes to ride 2 miles to eat at the Crown Inn at the neighbouring village of Catcott.

#### **A spot of wind**

*Jane has lost one her England flags. To be precise I saw it fall off under the wheels of a foreign lorry a couple of days ago (Hope that isn't an allegory for England's fate in the world cup.)*

*Although the remaining flag looks a bit sad on its own it still performs as a weather forecasting device. Today the flag was pointing towards Jane at any speed under 14mph which was good as it indicated a following wind.*

*Most riders do the End2End from South to North because of the prevailing wind. Luckily, we chose the other way as we have had the wind behind us most of the way. Our friends Rob and Jon were not so lucky today as they were riding into the teeth of the gale on their way from LE to JOG. We met them at the services by the Severn Bridge and had a chance to compare notes. After a couple of coffees we were a bit behind schedule but the following wind helped us arrive at our B&B on time*

*Special thanks to the couple at Gordano services who went to the cashpoint specially so they could give us a £20 donation for Macmillan. A record so far on this trip.*

*Peter*

#### **Jane here**

*It 's always interesting to see what various counties and towns like to declare as you enter their area. 'Welcome to Somewhereshire home to the world's finest collection of potholes' say.*

*We have learned that Cheshire is proud of its gardens, Whitchurch of its clocktowers and Much Wenlock claims to be where the Olympics originated. They are nearly all an Ancient Market Town, some are fairtrade towns. Some claim something like Britain in Bloom runner up 1997 medium sized towns in the north west beginning with W. One can only wonder though, at the head scratching that must go on when the wise civic dignitaries of certain places, sitting in council meetings far into the night, sucking their pencils, with colossal failure of imagination come up with '.... welcomes careful drivers' Whoa that'll really put them on the map. After all it's not as though there's much else you're famous for, is there? Cheddar?*

## Friday 11th June 2010 –Shapwick to Nether Exe 51 miles

We had arranged to stay with my brother Rob who lives North of Exeter. The 20 miles from Shapwick to Taunton were pleasantly flat with the elevation rarely over 20 feet above sea level. We passed a number of willow weaving establishments but unfortunately could not carry anything with us. The last few miles were along the towpath of the Bridgewater and Taunton canal which carried us right into the centre of Taunton away from traffic. After leaving the canal we found a good cycle shop where Jane bought yet another pair of cycling pants!

The sun was shining and we ate lunch at an outside table at a restaurant in the centre of Taunton. Finding our way out of Taunton was a bit tricky because of roadworks but we were soon on our way to Wellington.

After Wellington we joined the Grand Western canal as far as Sampford Peverell. Canals are a great way of avoiding traffic but some are easier to ride than others. I have a phobia of riding off the path into the water – a risk made worse by the narrow sections under the bridges. Jane seems to navigate these sections without fear – even when the local byelaws forbid riding under the bridge!



The canal at Taunton

At Sampford Peverell we encountered a navigation problem. The SATMAP GPS had proved a reliable guide during our journey so far but here the route took us to a dead end in the station car park. We had to retrace our path and find an alternative route through to Willand. By this time it was really hot and we were getting tired. The last 12 miles through Cullompton and on to Nether Exe near Thorverton seemed interminable.

We arrived to a family welcome and spent the evening catching up on gossip and sharing stories of our adventure so far. We also had the benefit of a washing machine and Aga at our disposal so everything went in – including Jane's mobile phone. It was noticed to be missing half way through the final spin cycle. Needless to say it didn't work when it was rescued and my nephew, John, who is an electronic engineer pronounced it to be deceased and beyond repair. However we took it to bits and left it on the Aga to dry out.



Rob & Meg + John

The last 2 days through Somerset had thankfully been very flat. The remaining journey through Devon and Cornwall is a different story however.



### Laundry

*We carry 2 days change of clothing and every night is occupied with the ritual of the nightly washbasin laundry. Today we have the fortune of staying with my brother Rob in Exeter - with a proper washing machine. Just as the wash was finishing Jane announced that she had lost her phone. A hot wash didn't do it any good at all and it is currently drying out on the AGA.*

*Jane doesn't like hills. Fair enough but routes don't come much flatter than the Somerset Levels. After tackling some serious hills during this trip we now reach a bridge over a railway line and Jane will complain "I thought you said this wasn't hilly".*

*Oh well, tomorrow we start the 'proper' hills through Devon. There is a strange clicking noise coming from my bottom bracket bearing. Surely it can't be failing again as it's only 8 weeks since I last replaced it.*

Peter

## Saturday 12th June 2010 Nether Exe to Launceston 45 miles

Amazingly Jane's phone worked again when re-assembled in the morning - it was also very clean!

The route via back lanes from Thorverton to Crediton bypasses the notorious Cadbury hill. However as soon as we left Crediton the hills started. We had already experienced the Devon Hills a month previously when we rode the coast to coast route and they were therefore not too much of a shock. At Sticklepath we joined the old A30 route and climbed over the hill which took us down to Okehampton.



We ate lunch at a cafe that we had visited during the coast to coast and then climbed the steep hill to Okehampton Station to join the Granite Way cycle path up onto Dartmoor. This path is an absolute delight and despite the fact that it climbs to 1000 feet it is easy riding. Once again we were blessed by fine weather and the views from the impressive viaduct were stunning.

At the top we left the cycle path and rejoined the old A30 road through Bridestowe to Launceston. The new A30 is very busy but the old road is a very nice ride if you are travelling West. It is quiet and there are long fast sweeping descents that made us glad we weren't going the other way. We made very good time and soon got to the Cornish border at the Tamar river just before Launceston. Just before this however, I had spotted something in the road and stopped to pick it up. It turned out to be a Canon digital camera which we took with us, intending to hand it in at a police station.



The viaduct on the Granite Way

Launceston is at the top of a hill and Glencoe Villa B&B was right at the top of the hill in the town. We arrived at the same time as a group of young rugby players who had left Lands End that morning with their support vehicle. They had cycled along the busy and dangerous 'new' A30 and had not booked any accommodation. They had to split between two guest houses.





In the evening we checked out the camera we had found only to discover pictures of a cyclist at Lands End that morning. The time of the picture was 6.30 am which was a puzzle as it showed the signpost in place. The signpost is owned by the Lands End photographer and is usually taken down at night. You have to pay to have it erected! On closer inspection, it turned out that the owner of the camera had taken his own DIY signpost with him. Very resourceful!

All the pubs were packed with people watching the England vs USA world cup match and we thought we wouldn't get any food so we ate at a fish & chip restaurant before going to a pub to watch the match. Sadly we arrived just after England had scored their one and only goal of the match and also found that the pub was serving free food to everyone!

#### **Cornwall**

*We are now at Launceston just inside Cornwall*

*Had a good day. The dreaded and famed Devon hills proved to be easier than expected probably because our JOGLE route has already been hillier than most because of the minor roads we have used. So we are used to hills.*

*It was great to stay with Rob & Meg last night. Thanks*

*After lunch in Okehampton an old friend - the Granite Way - provided a painless way of ascending to over 1000ft. We last rode this section of the route during the Devon coast to coast 8 weeks ago.*

*The last section down the old A30 was a delight with quiet roads and long fast descents. It also brought back memories of grinding slowly along the same section in traffic jams before the new A30 was built. I think we probably did it quicker today on our bikes.*

*Just before we arrived in Launceston I found a Canon digital camera in the road. We think the owner will be gutted to lose it as the pictures show a cyclist leaving Lands End this morning. I am sure we will track him down through his sponsorship details so we are holding onto it for now. If it's yours then please contact us*

*We passed the 900 mile mark today and the end is very close. Unfortunately both of our cycle computers have reset themselves during the trip so we won't be able to photograph the 1000mile counter.*

*Heading to our old stamping ground at Padstow then on down the North Cornish coast tomorrow.*

*Peter*

#### **Aga Saga**

*Jane boggling*

*I've never been one of those people who lusted after an Aga, thinking them perhaps a bit of a faff, but I may have been converted. We stayed with my brother Rob and his wife Meg last night who kindly allowed us to use their washing machine. My ancient and battered phone got washed in a pocket. When it came out it was very clean but mortally wounded. No vital signs such as a text from one of my offspring saying 'Where are you. What can I have to eat' I wasn't too distressed having been fancying a new one for a while. Anyway, we took it apart dried it off overnight on the Aga, reassembled it this morning, pressed the ON button and yes, up chirped that annoying little Nokia tune as chirpy as ever. Unbelievable. It's like the Top Gear Toyota, completely indestructible. I'll have to try dropping a caravan on it. I have a new respect for my old phone now. I think I'll hang on to it. I bet if it had been one of those fancy Blackberry and Apple thingies left in the oven all night it would have crumbled.*

*Oh dear.*

*Jane*

### **Sunday 13th June 2010 Launceston to Perranporth 53 miles**

We asked the rugby cyclists at breakfast whether they knew the owner of the camera. As it was Sunday, we would not find a police station to hand it in so we decided to hold onto it in the hope that we could track down the owner through clues in the pictures.

Our route from Launceston continued due West up the valley beside the river Kensey. This was quiet and very pretty. The road climbed gently through Egloskerry, passing a large windfarm, until we joined the A395 near Hallworthy. We stopped at a hotel for coffee and had to cycle for 3 miles along the busy A395 until we were able to turn off onto quieter roads at Davidstow. We crossed the A39 Bude road and turned South West through Delabole. Another windfarm loomed ahead as we passed the closed down “Gaia” alternative energy visitor centre. Our next target was the village of Rock on the North bank of the Camel estuary where we planned to get the Black Tor ferry to Padstow.

Last year we used the same ferry to carry our bikes in the opposite direction and due to an exceptionally low spring tide we had to push our bikes a considerable distance over soft sand from the beach at Daymer Bay. On this occasion it was also a low spring tide but fortunately the ferry landed at Rock.



The ferry was full and we made a nuisance of ourselves by pushing our bikes in front of the other passengers on the boat. The ticket collector seemed to have had a bad day and kept telling some children off for standing on the seats. When he came to us we half expected him to grumble at us but to the contrary he asked if we were collecting for charity and said we could travel free.



Padstow – picture taken by Louise from Macmillan

Because of the low tide the ferry didn't land at Padstow and instead we disembarked at a beach just outside the town. This entailed a rather awkward push of our heavily laden bikes up the path over the rocks and across a field into Padstow. We ate lunch at The Shipwrights Inn where a man at a nearby table presented us with some money that he had collected for us in a whipround among other customers. As we left we were approached by a lady called Louise who is an area fundraising manager for Macmillan. She was on holiday in Padstow and spotted our MacRide jerseys. She took some pictures of us to send back to the Macmillan Coventry office.

As we climbed the hill out of Padstow we were met by a bit of Cornish weather. It was the sort of drizzle that you only get in the South West that soaks you through to the skin in minutes flat. The remaining 20 miles to Perranporth were along the North coast with a switchback of river valleys and bays, each with steep roads in and out. We knew this area extremely well having holidayed in the area for over 40 years.

At the village of St Merryn we made a short detour to see the bungalow that had previously been owned by my family. It had been converted into a tea room but was closed and had been up for sale for a year. Then followed a pretty but hilly ride along the coastal road to Newquay. Fortunately the rain stopped and the sun actually came out but by the time we got to Newquay we were quite tired and wished we had arranged to stay there. It was another very hilly 10 miles to Perranporth but we finally arrived exhausted but elated to think that we only had 2 more short days riding to get to

Lands End. Perranporth was a place where Jane had spent childhood holidays. The beach looked beautiful with a spectacular sunset. I had left my camera back at the B&B and had to run back to get it before the sunset disappeared. However it was worth it!



Sunset at Perranporth

### **Mis-taken Identity**

*Hi Jane Blogging*

*Yesterday Pete found a camera on the road. We thought we might be able to find out who it belonged to by looking at the pictures and quickly discovered it was lost by a fellow 'end to ender' with his pictures of himself proudly about to set off. We thought he might have put his name up on the famous signpost just as we had at the other end. Pete studied the picture and worked out how to zoom in on the detail. He got very excited and said with a masterful piece of amateur sleuthery 'Yes there is a name. I can just make it out. It's, yes I think I can read it it looks... Yes it's John something.' I grabbed it and studied it closely 'Yes' I said 'It's John Ogroats and his friend 974 Miles' Ah well. I'm sure that with the combined resources of Sherlock here and the internet we should be able to find the rightful owner. Who may be called John Miles, but probably isn't.*

### **Another coast - another sunset**

*Today was tough. The first half from Launceston to Padstow was an easy climb up the Tamar valley followed by a descent along the coast to Rock.*

*The Black Tor ferry over to Padstow kindly let us travel free because we were fundraising. Low spring tide meant an awkward push of the bikes up the steps from the beach*

*Padstow was a must for us because of so many memories of holidays going back 60 years!*

*We had lunch at "The Wheelwrights" where unbeknown to us one of the customers had a whip-round and presented us with over £20 for Macmillan.*

*We also met the Manchester area Macmillan manager who happened to be there on holiday.*

*After lunch we had another 20 miles to do through a series of small seaside bays each with its own steep hill in and another out*

*By the time we reached Perranporth we were both shattered. There was the most fantastic sunset however.*

*We are now only 40 miles from Lands End but our plan is to take 2 days to do it. This is to allow us to get to LE at midday on Tuesday and also give us a bit of well earned relaxation.*

*Peter*

## Monday 14th June 2010 Perranporth to Lelant 24 miles

The prospect of 2 short days cycling to finish our trip was very appealing and was arranged so that we would arrive at Lands End at lunchtime. However as we set off up the hill out of Perranporth I found that my legs had no energy left. We had had a hard day yesterday but surely after 3 weeks we should have



been fitter than this? Perhaps it was the run back to the B&B last night for the camera but it took a large slab of cake with our coffee and a substantial lunch before normal service was resumed.

The ride along the cliffs between Portreath and Gwithian was amazing with spectacular views along the coast in both directions. At Gwithian we took a turn towards the National Trust beach at Godrevy where we found a restaurant on the beach for lunch. It was only a few miles from there to Hale and onwards to Lelant on the West bank of the River Hayle where we stayed at the Badger Inn.

The Badger Inn was a great find. We had intended to stay at St Ives but could not find any B&Bs that would take 1 night bookings. The Badger Inn was a really comfortable place to stay for our last night on the road with a range of real ales and an excellent restaurant. As we had arrived early we had time to walk down to the beach at Porth Kidney Sands where we enjoyed the late afternoon sunshine and watched some people kite surfing in the waves.



On the beach at Lelant

#### *Hitting the wall at 1000 miles*

*It's just as well today was a short day as my legs had run out of pedal today and I "bonked" before we had left Perranporth (Jane has previously explained that term). The hills of yesterday continue unabated and it wasn't until I stocked up at lunchtime that I got my strength back. I don't know why this happened as we had a good meal last night.*

*We took some time to explore the impressive cliffs and beaches between Portreath and Gwythian.*

*As we were riding through Hayle we passed the magic 1000 mile mark and I rode too close to a wall and nearly amputated my nearside pannier!*

*A lady on a Dawes Galaxy showed us a backroads way through Lelant and we are staying in the Badger inn which is a nice real ale pub.*

*Off to the beach for a little R&R before the final leg tomorrow. We expect to be at Lands End around lunchtime.*

*Peter*

*Some people are on the beach, they think it's all over.*

*Jane here.*

*We are safely in St Ives poised for the final assault on our target.*

*You know I told you about the camera we found, well there was nearly a heroic failure of epic proportions. This afternoon Peter left his own camera in a bar. All we would have had to show for our joggle efforts would have been 6 pictures of a random stranger's start of the ride at the wrong end. Luckily an alert local spotted it and returned it Phew*

## Tuesday 15th June 2010 Lelant to Lands End 22 miles

We set off on our last morning with a fresh North-Easterly wind helping us. The road to St Ives is flat but then there is a climb up onto the Lands End Peninsula. As we passed through St Ives we felt a bit smug when we saw the "Vacancies" signs showing on the same B&Bs that had turned us down when we had tried to book 3 months earlier. The B3306 road along the north of the peninsula is a real cyclist's road. It was quiet, scenic and fast. We had ridden along the same road the



St Ives



previous summer passing old mine workings. The wind was a great help and the sea was sparkling in the sunshine. This was how our last day was meant to be!

We had discovered a couple of months before that our friends John and Zanny Cooper would be holidaying in Cornwall at the same time as we were finishing and as they had not visited Lands End they said they would try to get there to meet us. At Sennen we passed the “first and last pub” and “first and last supermarket” and before we knew it we were cycling down the approach road to Lands End with the cluster of buildings at the end clearly in sight.



On the signpost at last!



The end

We expected some sort of sign to tell us which way to go when we arrived. We were looking for the famous signpost but took 2 wrong turns before we finally crossed the start/finish line and arrived at the end. John and Zanny were there to cheer us as we arrived and had brought a bottle of champagne which we drank in a sheltered spot out of the wind. They also very kindly had negotiated with the cameraman at the signpost to have our picture taken and also paid for it.

After lunch we had our route sheet stamped at the reception in the Lands End hotel and revisited the End to End exhibition that we had seen last year. The speeded up film of a car driving the route we had taken in 8 minutes was particularly interesting.

We then had to ride back to Penzance, a distance of 10 miles into the stiff wind that had been behind us earlier. We stayed in a nice B&B and treated ourselves to our one and only cream tea of the trip.

*It is now!*

*(Yes you could see where I was going with that one)*

*Jane blogging.*

*Well we did it, and without oxygen or sherpas.*

*You might get the impression from all this light hearted banter that it was a stroll in the park. It wasn't. It was the hardest thing I've ever done but I'm glad I did. I wouldn't have missed it for the world but to paraphrase Sir Steve Redgrave, if anyone ever sees me going anywhere near a bike ever again you have my permission to shoot me.*

*I know I never miss an opportunity to take the mick out of Peter but without all his meticulous planning we would never have made it, so well done to him.*

*P. S.*

*Anyone want to buy a bike, well used?*

*Only joking.*

*Is that it?*

*After 3 weeks of structure to our days and evenings there is a strange feeling now we have actually finished and achieved our goal.*

*No worry about drying the washbasin laundry, no searching around for enough sockets in the room to charge GPS, phone, camera etc. We don't even need to worry about getting enough calories on board for tomorrow (OK yes - we did reward ourselves with a massive cream tea!) We have even ordered continental breakfasts for tomorrow instead of the 'full English'*

*Today was an amazing day. Just the sort of finish I had dreamt about. Crystal blue skies, shimmering seas and a stonking following wind for the last 20 miles to Lands End.*

*On arrival at the finish we were met by friends Zanny & John Cooper with a bottle of champagne. They also kindly paid for the compulsory signpost picture. Thanks.*

*The 10 mile return ride to Penzance was into a stiff headwind.*

*Jane has made very nice compliments to me in her blog. I have enjoyed her blogs as much as everyone and I have been wondering every day what she would say about me. She never mentioned the time I put my GPS on the handlebars upside down and we nearly rode back to JOG.*

*It's amazing to think what we have done. Jane had hardly cycled more than 10 miles this time last year. When she announced her intention of coming along on my challenge last summer I must admit to a little scepticism. However as we did our training together it became clear that failure was not an option for her. Well done Jane.*

*We have been really lucky with the weather. We only had 2 wet half days and most days we had a following wind. However without those benefits we would still have finished it but it was just a lot more pleasant*

*Thanks to everyone who has supported us during the last 3 weeks. Hopefully see you all soon.*

*Peter*

## Postscript

The journey back to Birmingham on the train the following day made us realise just how far we had ridden. We identified a number of landmarks that we had seen on the trip – including the station car park where we had got lost at Sampford Peverell. At Birmingham we got the train to Redditch then cycled home.

The trip demonstrated both how big the country is and oddly also how small it is in that we could get from one end to the other under our own power.

We had cycled a total distance of 1020 miles since we left home 24 days previously. We had ascended and descended 61,000 feet – twice the height of Everest! Despite the fact that it looks downhill on the map the trip overall was uphill with a net height gain from start to finish of 214 feet. Between us we had made over 1 million pedal revolutions. We had obviously burnt a lot of calories but had also eaten a lot so weight loss was modest if at all. Mechanically we had suffered a broken chain but no other mishaps. Amazingly we had no punctures.

Thanks to everyone who supported us before during and after the ride – especially those who met us along the way, followed our blog, sent us encouraging messages and sponsored us. To date, 3 months after we finished the ride, we are a few pounds short of £4000 raised for Macmillan Cancer Support.

As for the camera that we found on the A30, we posted messages on end to end message boards and sent a poster to the John O’Groats café. None of these had any result so we finally took the camera and a picture which showed a car number plate to the local police. Within a week the owner contacted us to say that he had been reunited with the camera which actually belonged to his wife. He hadn’t even noticed that he had lost it!

Peter & Jane Harris

September 2010

## Appendix 1: Accommodation

Here is a list of places we stayed during our travel. Most were very good. A few were exceptional

Monday 24 May  
*Pentland Lodge House*  
*Granville Street*  
*Thurso*  
*Caithness*  
*KW14 7JN*  
*Tel/Fax: 01847 895103*  
*e-mail: [info@pentlandlodgehouse.co.uk](mailto:info@pentlandlodgehouse.co.uk)*

Tuesday 25 May  
*The Farr Bay Inn*  
*Bettyhill,*  
*Sutherland,*  
*Scotland.*  
*KW14 7SZ*  
*Telephone : 01641 521 230*  
*Email : [info@farrbayinn.co.uk](mailto:info@farrbayinn.co.uk)*

Wednesday 26 May  
*Kyle House B&B*  
*Bonar Bridge*  
*Sutherland*  
*IV24 3EB*  
*Tel: 01863 766360*  
*Email: [kylehouse360@msn.com](mailto:kylehouse360@msn.com)*

Thursday 27 May  
*Rosalyn Luffman*  
*Bridgend House*  
*Village Green*  
*Drumnadrochit IV63 6TX*  
*Scotland*  
*Tel: 01456 450865*  
*Email: [bridgend49@homecall.co.uk](mailto:bridgend49@homecall.co.uk)*

Friday 28 May  
*Mrs. A.R. Clark*  
*Gowan Brae*  
*Union Road*  
*Fort William*  
*Invernesshire*  
*Scotland*  
*PH33 6RB*  
*Telephone 01397 704 399*  
*[gowan\\_brae@btinternet.com](mailto:gowan_brae@btinternet.com)*



Saturday 29 May	<p><i>Mrs Julie Ferguson</i>  <i>Inverasdale</i>  <i>Soroba Road</i>  <i>Oban</i>  <i>Argyll</i>  <i>PA34 4SA</i>  <i>Tel:01631 571031</i>  <i>Mobile 07765 278658</i></p>
Sunday 30 May	<p><i>The Corran</i>  <i>Poltalloch Street</i>  <i>Lochgilphead</i>  <i>Argyll PA31 8LR</i>  <i>Telephone : 01546 603866</i>  <i>Fax : 01546 603051</i>  <i>Email : <a href="mailto:enquiries@lamonthoy.co.uk">enquiries@lamonthoy.co.uk</a></i></p>
Monday 31 May	<p><i>Carrick House</i>  <i>Brodick</i>  <i>Isle of Arran</i>  <i>KA27 8BH</i>  <i>Tel: 01770 302550</i>  <i>Mobile: 07766 074762</i></p>
Tuesday 01 Jun	<p><i>Malc &amp; Jennie</i>  <i>Rigg House</i>  <i>Kirkconnel</i>  <i>Nr Sanquhar</i>  <i>Dumfriesshire, DG4 6NR</i>  <i>Phone: (+44) 01659 66489</i></p>
Wednesday 02 Jun	<p><i>The Old Rectory Guesthouse</i>  <i>12 Saint John's Road, Annan, Dumfries and Galloway DG12</i>  <i>6AW</i>  <i>01461 202 029</i></p>
Thursday 03 Jun	<p><i>Andy &amp; Sue Judge</i>  <i>The Hollies</i>  <i>Threlkeld</i>  <i>Nr. Keswick</i>  <i>Cumbria</i>  <i>CA12 4RX</i>  <i>Tel: 017687 79216</i></p>
Friday 04 Jun	<p><i>The Old Station House</i>  <i>25 Meeting House Lane</i>  <i>Lancaster LA1 1TX</i>  <i>Tel: 01524 381060</i></p>
Saturday 05 Jun	<i>Frodsham</i>
Sunday 06 Jun	<i>Frodsham</i>

Monday 07 Jun  
*Church Farm Guest House  
Wrockwardine Village  
Wellington  
Telford  
Shropshire  
TF6 5DG  
Telephone 01952 251927*

Tuesday 08 Jun  
*The Holly Tree,  
21 Barton Rd,  
Hereford, HR4 0AY  
Tel 01432 357845  
Mob 07805 586263*

Wednesday 09 Jun  
*First Hurdle Guest House  
9-10 Upper Church Street  
Chepstow  
Gwent  
NP16 5EX  
Tel 01291 622189*

Thursday 10 Jun  
*Church Cottage  
Station Road  
Shapwick  
Bridgwater  
Somerset  
TA7 9NH*

Friday 11 Jun  
*Rob & Meg*

Saturday 12 Jun  
*Glencoe Villa,  
13 Race Hill,  
Launceston PL15 9BB  
Tel 01566 775 819*

Sunday 13 Jun  
*Penarth Guest House  
26 St Pirans Road  
Perranporth  
Cornwall  
TR6 0BH  
Tel. +44 (0) 1872 573186*

Monday 14 Jun  
  
*The Badger Inn  
Fore Street  
Lelant  
St Ives  
Cornwall  
TR26 3JT  
  
Telephone: 01736 752181*

Tuesday 15 Jun

*The Pendennis  
Alexandra Road  
Penzance  
Cornwall  
TR18 4LZ*

I should also mention  
Raymont House B&B in  
Hatherleigh Devon where  
we stayed 2 nights during  
our Devon training Coast to  
Coast ride.

*Jan and Alan Toogood  
Raymont House  
49 Market Street  
Hatherleigh  
Devon EX20 3JP*

*Tel: 01837 810850  
email: [info@raymonthouse.co.uk](mailto:info@raymonthouse.co.uk)*