

John's JOGLE (3 July 2013 to 21 July 2013)

Like many other people I have had an ambition to complete an "End to End". I started planning the challenge a year in advance and decided at the start to do the JOGLE for some psychological reason LEJOG did not appeal to me as much. I argued that the mountains of Scotland would prepare me adequately for the steep inclines of Devon and Cornwall and this proved to be true.

I had not done any serious cycling for some 20 years; in fact it was when we came to live in the Cotswolds that I decided to wrap my bike up because I considered the narrow country lanes are not conducive to cycling. In the meantime I had ridden regularly in our many journeys to France. However; it had to be a night in the Oxhouse Wine Bar in Northleach after a glass too many that I decided to bite the bullet and go for it.

The Bike

I visited a number of cycle shops in the area and explained of my ultimate aim. Cotswold Cycles based in Moreton-on-Marsh introduced me to a Ridgeback Voyage World, with triple gearing and is strong, sturdy and reliable and that is what it proved to be.

Preparation

Sportives: for 14 months I concentrated on sportive events. The first was The Classic Oxfordshire Sponsored Bike Ride at Harwell in May 2012; I entered the 30 mile ride which seemed a sensible distance. The first 20 miles passed without incidence but then I suffered with cramp, the last 10 miles taking an anguished 90 minutes. Within 8 weeks I had completed my first 100km and eventually finishing the year in October with a 76 mile ride in the Wiggle South Downs Sportive.

I spent the winter months training on my turbo trainer and it was not until March that I ventured out on another sportive after which I rode in Sportives on most weekends and during the weeks that followed built up my weekly mileage to 100/150miles a week.

Fully Loaded Run: Always at the back of my mind was the concern of how I would react to cycling fully loaded for 60 miles day after day. I did fit in one 100km ride with full panniers and was confident that I could comfortably cope for at least the first few days of the JOGLE; I did not have the time to test myself over a number of consecutive days.

The Route

I decided to follow a CTC route for B&B's which kept me off the main roads as much as possible. The recommended CTC route was based on LEJOG so I had to invert it into the direction of JOGLE. The following table shows my route without the detail.

John O' Groats to Land's End Route 1,000 miles

(Note: route avoids main trunk roads where possible so it is a little longer than the standard 874 miles)

<u>Day</u>	<u>Date</u> <u>2013</u>	<u>From - To</u>	<u>Distance</u> <u>(Miles)</u>	<u>Comments</u>
1	Wed 3 July	John O' Groats to Bettyhill <i>(Note: Cycled to Duncansby Head previous day)</i>	61	Highland <i>(Via visit to Dunnet Head)</i>
2	Thurs 4 July	Bettyhill to Bonar Bridge	60	Highland
3	Fri 5 July	Bonar Bridge to Nairn	55	Highland
4	Sat 6 July	Inverness to Braemar	70	Cairngorms
5	Sun 7 July	Braemar to Aberuthven	60	Perthshire
6	Mon 8 July	Aberuthven to Edinburgh	50	Edinburgh
7	Tues 9 July	Rest Day		Edinburgh
8	Wed 10 July	Rest Day		Edinburgh
9	Thurs 11 July	Edinburgh to Langholm	75	Lothian/ Dumfries & G
10	Fri 12 July	Langholm to Appleby	59	Westmoreland
11	Sat 13 July	Appleby to Whalley Abbey	67	Lancashire
12	Sun 14 July	Whalley Abbey to Middlewich	66	Cheshire
13	Mon 15 July	Middlewich to Much Wenlock	54	Shropshire
14	Tues 16 July	Much Wenlock to Ross on Wye	61	Herefordshire
15	Wed 17 July	Rest Day		Herefordshire
16	Thurs 18 July	Ross on Wye to Chew Stoke	50	Avon
17	Fri 19 July	Chew Stoke to Bish Mill	81	Devon
18	Sat 20 July	Bish Mill to Wadebridge	74	Cornwall
19	Sun 21 July	Wadebridge to Land's End	57	Cornwall

I broke up the journey as follows:

- 6 cycling days
- 2 rest days with Sarah my wife in Edinburgh
- 6 cycling days
- 1 rest day with Sarah in Ross-on-Wye
- 4 cycling days to Land's End

I broke most of the general rules i.e.

- I did the route on my own although I was accompanied by my nephew Nikhil and his friend Daniele on Day 12, and my close friends Ian and his son Jack accompanied me on Day 16 from Goodrich near Ross-on-Wye to the Severn Bridge. Two other

friends Patrick and Liz met us for lunch on the English side of the Bridge.

- I included rest days. Some argue that it is difficult to start again after a rest. I found the rests useful and a number of End to Enders that I met on my way down mentioned that they wished that they had introduced rest days. They suited me and it gave my wife Sarah the opportunity to join me for 3 days and also see a little of Edinburgh.

Transporting the Bike

From JOG: I gave this much thought and after research on the internet decided that John O' Groats Bike Transport based in Inverness provided the best value for my circumstances. Cotswold Cycles in Moreton-in-Marsh packed the bike for me and DNT collected the bike along with a box of personal affects to be carried in my panniers. JOG Bike Transport did the rest they delivered it to John O' Groats Seaview Hotel where I found everything put together and in working order.

From LE: Sarah my wife met me with the car.

Getting there: The cheapest option for me was by:

- Flight Birmingham to Edinburgh,
- Flight Edinburgh to Wick
- Coach from Wick to JOG

Left Birmingham at 09.00 hours arrived JOG by 15.00 hours.

Arrival at John O' Groats

Duncansby Head the Most NE point of the Mainland



I arrived the afternoon prior to setting off. Priority was the bike; John O' Groats Bike Transport had set the bike up in a garage of the Seaview Hotel ready and waiting for me. I decided to give the bike a run and ventured down to the starting point, had my photograph taken in both charity shirts, and then cycled to Duncansby Head the most North Easterly point of the Mainland about 3 miles from JOG. All was fine so I was ready to start my challenge the following day.

Also my arrival in John O' Groats coincided with 6 cyclists from Derby Mercury Cycling Club having completed the LEJOG in 44 hours, cycling as a relay team. Well done lads and thank you for the support and encouragement that you gave me.

Selected Charities

Against Breast Cancer
Beat (Beating eating disorders)

Many thanks to:

Stephen Eggleton - Ox House Wine Bar Northleach

Andrew Hutchings - Cotswold Cycles, Moreton-in-Marsh

Berwyn Events, Housing Partners (Worcester), Mrs Alice Shuttleworth, Nibblers, Cotswold Seeds, Mr Matt Jackson, Your Cotswold Link, Sarah Parfitt, Dougie and their musician friends, Liz, Patrick and my wife Sarah plus all others who gave up their precious time in giving their support by making their wonderful, generous donations.

Day 1 Wednesday 3 July 2013 - John O' Groats to Bettyhill via Dunnet Head Distance: 61 miles

The Start



09.45 hours - A little nervous but received applause from the members of Derby Mercury CC as I left the hotel on my way to the start. There is at the moment no start as such, because of work being carried out in the vicinity of where it used to be. The Tourist Office advised me to circle the small roundabout and other than going for a swim with the bike it was the most sensible point.

10.00 hours - Oh, Oh would you believe the rain started and the head wind picked up. Within 15 minutes the rain was falling heavily and the wind was persistently strong. Well I did want to go from North to South.

I decided to visit Dunnet Head the most Northerly Point of the UK Mainland. The combination of the rain and wind almost put paid to that but miraculously the rain stopped and the wind died down a little some 400 yards from the turn off point so the decision was made to go for it. "It" being the longest 5.5 miles of cycling that I can recall.

Dunnet Head the most Northerly point of the Mainland



Another surprise on reaching Dunnet Head there was a RSPB team, successfully attempting to prevent their marquee taking off to Scandinavia whilst at the same time carrying out a survey of all visitors. So a photo shoot and the completion of their survey was followed by a relaxing downhill ride to be met by the boys from Derby Mercury enjoying their one free day after their 44 hour exploit from Land's End.

The ride to Bettyhill is undulating but the rain stayed off although the wind continued to be persistent, finally calming down around 17.00hours by which time I was having a relaxing coffee at Strathy Inn, after which I was left with a 1 hour ride to Bettyhill.

Accommodation

Farr Bay Inn, Bettyhill, Telephone: 01641 521230

Day 2 Thursday 4 July 2013 - Bettyhill to Bonner Bridge

Distance: 60 miles

NOW I KNOW WHY PEOPLE PREFER LEJOG TO THE JOGLE. The day started off so pleasant, I checked my route with a motorist who commented that the conditions were ideal for cycling and I agreed with him.

Church on Strathnaver Trail (Junction B871/873)



That is how it remained until I reached the shores of Loch Naver. At this point the wind picked up, I struggled along the banks of the loch to Altnaharra where I took refuge in the local pub. It was really not encouraging to listen to the other customers saying how they had to give up fishing because the wind was almost blowing them over. They also warned me of the signs of a brewing storm. So it was decision time "Stick or Go?" Bearing in mind that the weather forecast had not made mention of any storm or for that matter high winds, but then I thought perhaps the intensity of the winds were normal for the area. I decided to go. The 8 mile climb from Altnaharra to the top of the A836 took 90 minutes. The A836 by the way is just a single track road with passing places. The scenery is stunning even when you are struggling.

Decision time came again at Crask Inn, the clouds appeared to be closing in but knowing it was all downhill to Bonner Bridge I decided to push on.

On arriving at Bonner Bridge the kind land lady informed me that the wind had been high enough for her to take down her hanging baskets before the wind did it for her.

LEJOGGERS

During the day I came across no less than 15 LEJOGGERS some in pairs others in groups. I spoke to all of the teams. It was refreshing to hear encouraging words of safe journeys, and wishing each other the best of luck and a successful completion.

Accommodation

Kyle House, Bonar Bridge, IV24 3EB

Telephone: 01863 766360

Day 3 Friday 5 July 2013 - Bonar Bridge to Nairn

Distance: 55 miles

The day started well meeting a father and daughter who had made their way from LE. They were hoping to complete the LEJOG on Saturday.

Got away by 09.15 in very pleasant conditions following the Dornoch Firth for 4 miles then turning off the A836 on to the B9176 to Alness followed by Evanton and finally to Dingwall where I enjoyed one of the pleasantries of cycling having tea and cakes outside in the sun.

Then surprise, surprise found a cycle path all the way to Inverness running parallel but away from the A835. Had a little difficulty negotiating the roundabout at Thom, some local idiots had turned a signpost 90 degrees from its true position this cost me an additional 2 miles.

Why Nairn? You may ask it is surely better to go direct from Inverness to Dava then stay the night at a B&B before pushing on to the Cairngorms. I had seriously considered this but could not locate accommodation once past Inverness. So I decided to pre-book at a hotel in Nairn this gave me a more direct route to the Cairngorms.

Accommodation

Waverley Hotel, High Street, Nairn, IV12 4BJ

Telephone: 01667 453001

Day 4 Saturday 6 July 2013 - Nairn to Braemar

Distance: 70 miles

I always knew that this would be the real test. I never once doubted that I would complete the challenge to Land's End but this would be a barometer regarding whether or not I could maintain my schedule. Summarising, the day included:

- 12 hours plus from start to finish

- Persistent headwind for the first 3/4 hours
- Pleasant sunshine and warm temperatures from then on
- Lunch at Grantown on Spey
- Afternoon tea at Tomintoul
- Long and persistent climbs for most of the day, with only an occasional relief of a downhill bonus.
- Stunning views of snow-capped mountains.
- Climbed a 20% hill on the east side of the Vale of Morgan which gave me real confidence.
- Was beaten by the second 20% hill/mountain which climbs up to the Lecht Ski Resort.
- Sweeping run down into Corgarff followed by more climbs particularly the B976 to Crathie.
- The final 9 miles from Crathie to Braemar was most tiring eventually arriving at my accommodation at 20.45 hours with my lights on.

The "downhill bit" on leaving the Lecht Ski Resort



Accommodation

Schiehallion Guest House, Braemar, AB35 5YQ Telephone: 01339 741679

Day 5 Sunday 7 July 2013 - Braemar to Aberuthven (near Auchterarder)

Distance: 60 miles

Injury

Woke up and noticed a swelling of the left ankle which had turned reddish in colour, but gave no pain. I decided that I would cycle with the top two straps of my left shoe undone. Note: I had a first aid kit with me but had not put in any strapping - lesson learnt.

Another Long Day

I learnt today that it is not necessarily the distance that you travel that makes the day long but the constant checking and rechecking of the map as you navigate through villages and hamlets in an effort to stay on the country roads veering away from the A9 and the city of Perth.

The day started with a lovely sun and also another inevitable climb, on this occasion up to the ski resort of Glenn Shee. If not as steep as the climb up to the Lech Ski Resort then it was certainly as persistent but well worth the effort and the reward of coffee and cake once the summit was reached. A local cyclist told me that it was one of the few occasions that he had tackled the climb without the wind confronting him all the way.

Perhaps I was lucky because the wind never bothered me for the rest of my journey to Land's End.

Leaving the café summit it was a downhill freewheel which eventually took me out of the Cairngorms and this was made noticeable by the changing texture of the countryside.

Afternoon tea at Blairgowrie and then a slow journey made by my constant checking of the map through country roads to Aberuthven, which needless to say included another signpost that had been turned 90 at right angles at an offset crossroads.

The proprietor of the Smiddy Haugh Inn had kindly held back his Chef for me and the customers had a whip round and raised £15 towards my charities and then the proprietor kindly donated a further £10. Thank you to everyone for your support.

Accommodation

Smiddy Haugh Inn, Main Road, Aberuthven, PH3 1HE Telephone: 01764 662013

Day 6 Monday 8 July 2013 - Aberuthven to Edinburgh

Distance: 50 miles

Monday was another wonderful sunny day. I cycled through Auchterader and came across Gleneagles Golf Course where some enthusiastic golfers insisted on taking my photograph outside the main entrance. The temperature had begun to soar as I climbed up and over the A823 Gleneagles Pass on my way towards Dunfermline.

Closer to Dunfermline a local girl cyclist caught up with me; apparently she had completed LEJOG in 2005. She added that had she known Devon and Cornwall to be so hilly, she would definitely have not entertained the idea of doing the end to end. However she also recalled that as the days wore on she noticeably became fitter - this comment gave me much encouragement.

The Forth Bridge on a "Sunny Day"



You cannot miss the Forth Bridge it can be seen for miles, but try and locate the cycle signs to it. Before locating the cycle route, I had asked 5 locals within 2 miles of the bridge for directions for cyclists and was given:

- One which included "You will have to carry your bike up a flight of steps from the very bottom" (as I began to cross the bridge I actually passed the top of the steps and looked down, I am glad I do not suffer from vertigo).
- A second that would have had me cycling across with the road traffic.
- A third that was at right angles to the previous 2 suggestions.
- The fourth was a "don't know".
- And a fifth one who put me right when within 200 yards of the cyclist sign post for the bridge, and then I did not spot the sign until I was on the opposite side of the road some 40 yards away.

The local authorities need to take some advice from Edinburgh where the directions are clearly marked.

The view on crossing the bridge was most "airy" as one looked across and viewed the railway bridge poking itself above the clouds.

LEJOGGERS

On the bridge I met 8 other End to Enders who were doing LEJOG, cordial greetings, light conversation about our routes and wishes of safe journeys were most apparent.

Edinburgh

Congratulations to the Edinburgh authorities for providing a 10 mile cycle route not only to the centre of the city but to the outer boundaries. Thanks also to John and Fiona for guiding me to my hotel, it was greatly appreciated, and as they said "We don't get many sunny days like this, and it signals to us that it is time to use our bikes"

Accommodation (3 Nights / 2 Rest Days)

Victoria Park Hotel, 221 Ferry Road, Edinburgh, EH6 4NN Telephone: 01314 542060

Days 7 & 8 Tuesday 9 and Wednesday 10 July 2013 Rest Days

Many people commented before and after the challenge on the idea of having rest days. My own view was to always enjoy the challenge and have some chill out time.

Not knowing how I would feel I considered 6 days cycling would give me a good idea in sorting any problems that I may have encountered, plus the opportunity to meet my wife Sarah who flew from Bristol to join me for 2 days.

So after 6 days I had learnt:

- Progress each day was slower than I anticipated. On my Ridgeback World Voyager I normally average 12/13 mph when doing 100 km Sportives. With full panniers this dropped dramatically to as low as 6/8 mph in the Highlands.
- This forced me to lighten my load. I had been prepared for this having been told by more than one end to ender that they had to make the same decisions. So I posted back:

- One complete set of cycling kit - I had been carrying 3 complete sets and decided that two were ample and could be washed at my next rest point.
- One set of waterproof trouser bottoms - It was the summer and so the rain would not be too cold for comfort.
- One waterproof top - I originally took 2 waterproof tops.
- Used maps - I did not like the idea of throwing the old ones away which may become useful when writing this journal.
- A portable charger - I never had to use it because all the B& B's had an electrical supply.
- One spare notebook.
- 2 magazines that I originally thought I would have time to read - I never even opened them.

The 2 rest days also allowed me time to treat my swollen ankle which fortunately was slowly subsiding. Interestingly a large percentage of those that I met doing LEJOG thought that having rest days was a good idea, but then again a number of them were restricted on the time available because of work commitments.

My own advice is that if you can afford the time to have rest days plan them in to your itinerary.

Day 9 Thursday 11 July 2013 Edinburgh to Langholm

Distance: 75 miles

[Tranquair House](#)



WOW!!! What a day. The inevitable climb from sea level in Edinburgh to Langholm in the Scottish Borders via Penicuik and Peebles.

The scenery was once more absolutely stunning, enhanced with the temperature being 25C and virtually no wind. The ride from Peebles following the River Tweed is highly recommended as indeed is a stop for coffee and cakes at the local theatre in Peebles. By following the river along the B7062 you eventually come across Tranquair House which is the oldest habitable home in Scotland in which 27 Kings have visited. It is a shame that when doing an end to end there are so many places one would like to stop and visit but regrettably time does not allow. However; in this instance I asked permission at the gate if I could ride up to the house take some photographs and then leave. Permission was granted by the kind attendants without charging me an entrance fee

Once more the kindness of the people that one meets throughout the country is nothing short of amazing. I believe that the negativity forced on us by the media from the activities of a minority, completely overlooks the total goodness that is within our society.

The 44 mile ride from Tranquair to Langholm is one of the most pleasant that one could wish for, a long steady climb up the B709 in which you eventually come across the Sanye Ling Monastery the first Tibetan Buddhist Centre to have been established in the West it was a surreal experience seeing a Buddhist Monk walking down the main street in full regale.

Accommodation

Carnlea, 16 Hillside Crescent, Langholm, DG13 0EE Telephone: 01387 380284

Day 10 Friday 12 July 2013 Langholm to Appleby in Westmorland

Distance: 59 miles

Liddle Water Left Bank England Right Scotland



What a corker of a day. Crossed the Border and felt slightly emotional when crossing the Border over Liddel Water which eventually flows into the River Esk. Not quite half way but getting there. I thought that I was good at reading maps, but suffered a lack of confidence when the signs pointing to Brampton suddenly disappeared and are replaced by other names which are not on my AA Road Map. This led to a half hour delay whilst I stood on my head trying to reason my error when along comes a friendly farmer, who confirms that I was on the right road.

Donations

At breakfast I received £23 in donations from other boarders and the land lady.

On arriving in the Beer Garden of the Naggs Head in Brampton Kris, Melvin and Tee Bone (a visiting dog) immediately donated £7 to the charities. Melvin then made me promise to visit the Shoulder of Mutton across the road once I had finished my drink. On arriving at the Shoulder of Mutton they had already had a whip round and collected £25.58. Many thanks lads it was a wonderful gesture and greatly appreciated.

This caused a 90 minute delay in leaving Brampton, but after 7/8 miles I came across 2 local cyclists at the top of a hill on the B6413, they donated all their spare change - £1.50.

Later on that evening I was having my evening meal and broke into conversation with Gavin and Karen who had had a problem with their booking. They took an interest in what I was doing and asked for my [virginmoneygiving](#) details, to my absolute surprise when I returned home I found that the generous pair had donated £30.

Not once in any of the conversations did I mention never mind ask for donations. The lovely kind people all asked me for which charities I was raising money. For once in my life I felt humbled. In all £87.08 was donated this day.

Accommodation

Bongate House, Appleby in Westmorland, CA16 6UE Telephone: 01768 351245

Day 11 Saturday 13 July 2013 Appleby in Westmorland to Whalley Abbey

Distance: 67 miles

My first full days cycling in England and my first mistake was thinking that I had left the big climbs behind me; at least until I reached Devon and Cornwall. On leaving Appleby the first 10 miles were rather pleasant until I reached Junction 38 of the M5. From then on the climb towards Kendal was pretty persistent. On reaching the summit I met an American couple making their way to Kilmarnock from their starting place in Stuttgart Germany. Here is a lesson on always respecting other people, the lady had cycled all the way through Germany, France and England on a 3 gear bike!!!!!!

The ride from here to Kirkby Lonsdale in North Yorkshire was most pleasant on a day which turned out to be the hottest day of the year so far, but it was to get hotter as the week progressed.

I found difficulty negotiating Barton Lonsdale and High Bentham made even more difficult by our friend who tampers with sign posts.

Took on refreshments at Bentham where the locals were surprised that I was going to Clitheroe via the Forest of Bowland. What a climb that proved to be. I was under the impression that the climbing was over once I reached Slaidburn, that was another of my mistakes. The ride from Slaidburn to Bradfell Fell has to be experienced by all serious climbers, but eventually I reached my destination at Whalley Abbey, 5 miles South of Clitheroe.

End to Enders

At the top of Bradfell Fell I was overtaken by a team of 3 other cyclists who were doing the JOGLE. Tom and his 2 friends had left JOG 5 days previously and were really motoring. They had also had difficulties in negotiating Barton Lonsdale and Bentham, and had also had difficulties locating some of their camp sites one of which was on the map but did not exist. They soon left me for their night's camp site - just hope that you made a successful run to LE lads.

Accommodation

Whalley Abbey, Whalley, Lancashire, BB7 9SS Tel: 01254 828400

Day 12 Sunday 14 July 2013 Clitheroe to Middlewich

Distance: 66 miles

By previous arrangement I was joined by my nephew Nikhil and his friend Daniele and I was grateful for their company. They looked upon it as a celebratory break from the completion of their A Level results prior to going to University.

I decided to let them do the navigation because this was; in my opinion; the most complex of all the stages i.e. travelling between Manchester and Liverpool shaving Blackburn, Chorley, Wigan and Bolton???? (How did you manage to fit Bolton in lads?). So I sat back and followed my leaders' o/k a missed turning or two was made but the lads made it safely to Warrington where they had to catch the train back home. I then carried on to Middlewich. Their enthusiasm, humour and company were greatly appreciated.

Donation

Warrington Wolves were playing a Rugby League cup match that day and we asked 2 of their supporters Terry and Margaret the location of the railway station. They asked a few questions and without further ado emptied their pockets of all the loose change that they had for the benefit of the charities. Many thanks I will now always have a soft spot for Warrington Wolves.

Accommodation

Boars Head Hotel, Kinderton Street, Middlewich, CW10 OJE Telephone: 01606 833191

Day 13 Monday 15 July 2013 Middlewich to Much Wenlock

Distance: 54 miles

This was a very humid day with temperatures hovering around 25C. Each day brings along pleasant surprises

The first surprise of the day was the relative flatness from Middlewich to Telford and perhaps not as surprising the climb up towards Much Wenlock.

So all in all a rather straight forward days cycling the most difficult part of navigation was following the cycle track around the Telford by-pass. It did not take long to realise that the cycle track alternated from one side of the road to the opposite at each roundabout. Why don't the authorities wake up and put little cycle path directions when a change occurs?

Unexpectedly I completed the days ride before 17.00 hours, but my legs felt tired probably due to a delayed reaction from the exertions of Saturday. In my notebook I wrote "Just hope that I am suitably rested for tomorrow which from my knowledge of the Wye Valley will no doubt be testing"

The JOGLE takes you to places that you have never heard of and are full of character. Much Wenlock reminds me of a town which both the 20th Century and the digital revolution passed bye. It is a most delightful place to visit, you can imagine that it has not changed for above 100 years, and with no mobile signal available, for some people that is now their utopia; highly recommended for a visit.

Donation

Another of today's surprises occurred at the Longhome Café on the outskirts of Telford. Upon finding that I was raising funds for charity Sam (Samantha) the owner immediately donated £4 to the causes. Many thanks Sam for your wonderful enthusiasm.

Accommodation

Wenlock Pottery and Craft Centre, Shineton Street, Much Wenlock, Shropshire, TF13 6HT Telephone: 01952 727600 Email: wenlockpots@btopenworld.com

Day 14 Tuesday 16 July 2013 Much Wenlock to Goodrich (Ross-on-Wye)

Distance: 61 miles

Symonds Yat near Goodrich (Ross-on-Wye)



This was a relatively uneventful day. The temperatures were once more +25C and perhaps it was because of the accumulation of the heat, fatigue and the constant checking and rechecking of the map as you navigate through villages and hamlets that I decided to take the most direct route to Goodrich. This included 2 persistent climbs the first prior to Hereford and the other approaching Ross-on-Wye.

I was looking forward to meeting Sarah that evening and she had booked accommodation at Ye Old Hostellerie, Goodrich some 4 miles south of Ross.

However that evening I felt twinges of cramp in my left thigh, perhaps it was my good fortune to have a scheduled rest day on Wednesday.

Donation

In the hotel gardens I came across 5 riders who were on day 3 of LEJOG they were raising funds for Family Life www.familylifeuk.org/lejog they most generously donate £15. This was a most magnanimous gesture considering that they were raising funds for their own charity. Once more I felt belittled.

Accommodation

The Hostellerie, Goodrich, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 6HX Telephone: 01600 890241

Day 15 Wednesday 17 July 2013 Goodrich (Ross-on-Wye) - Rest Day

This was a most useful rest day, I was fortunate enough to find a Chinese therapist situated in the centre of Ross-on-Wye. She managed to fit me in and offered me acupuncture and massage and it certainly paid dividends. Cramp had been my main fear in the planning of the challenge. To prevent it I had religiously applied rubbing oils each morning and evening in addition to taking 2 Crampex tablets and 1 magnesium tablet each evening. The cramp may have occurred because I was not doing enough stretching exercises.

Contact details of the therapist:

18 High Street, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 5HL telephone: 01989 566689

Day 16 Thursday 18 July 2013 Goodrich (Ross-on-Wye) to Chew Stoke

Distance: 50 miles

I was becoming a little nervous about the final 4 days, would my luck hold out? Had I given myself too much to do? What if? Every conceivable situation was going through my mind, perhaps had I been accompanied throughout these thoughts would not have played on my mind as they did. Whatever problems occurred I knew I would overcome them even if it meant extending my schedule for a day or two.

As luck would have it today I was to be joined by my friends Ian and his son Jack and they were to accompany me to the Old Severn Bridge.

Another stroke of luck was that the proprietor, Aaron of Ye Old Hostellerie was a cyclist who knew the area (and had also completed the JOGLE in some outstanding time). He told us of a route running parallel to the A40 towards Monmouth. We would have to use the A40 for a 2 mile stretch after which we would follow the River Wye until it joined the River Severn and eventually we would make contact with the Old Severn Bridge.

Following the Wye was enchanting to say the least; although it never fails to amaze me why there are so many hills to climb as you follow a river downstream. The spectacular view of Tintern Abbey alongside one of the most pleasant cafés with Pullman coaches was one of many happy memories of this most pleasing of runs.

England's over there



We crossed the Old Severn Bridge and once more entered England where we met up as previously arranged with Patrick and Liz who had so kindly taken me to Birmingham airport some 2 weeks or more ago. After a good lunch it was time to once more go our separate ways.

Bristol

Just a little word or two about Bristol. Do you circumnavigate it or go through? With my little knowledge of the city, I knew it was going to be hectic regarding traffic whichever route I chose. So decision made I decided to follow the cycle track down to the Brunel Bridge and then on in the direction of Chew Stoke via the A38.

LEJOGGERS

Met 2 chaps 2 miles from Avonmouth, they were on their way to JOG, having left LE on the Monday 15th. They asked me for directions to the Old Severn Bridge and as always after a short conversation pleasantries were exchanged wishing each other safe journeys.

Accommodation

Orchard House, Bristol Road, Chew Stoke, BS40 8UB Telephone: 01275 333143

Day 17 Friday 19 July 2013 Chew Stoke to Bish Mill (Devon)

Distance: 81 miles (Not including getting lost)

I was concerned about going cross country for most of the day. The reason being that the quality of the AA Road Maps are not sufficiently accurate on country lanes e.g. the names of a villages can be printed some distance away from their actual location. My original plan was to cycle to Bridgewater then go over the Brendon Hills then cut across in a westerly direction towards South Molten. However; after discussing the situation with a local over breakfast he advised me to take the B3227 NW of Taunton stating that it was not specifically busy and quite easy to follow and this it proved to be. However I had to negotiate Cheddar Gorge and then Bridgewater first. My usual problem regarding sign posts resurfaced they suddenly stopped showing directions to Cheddar Gorge. Eventually a kind chap put me on the way to a journey that I will forever remember.

Cheddar Gorge

Cheddar Gorge



I had never before visited Cheddar Gorge, when coming from the East it is all downhill but above all it is absolutely breath-taking and goes down in my journey as one of those experiences that will always live in my memory.

Lost Maps = Lost Cyclist

Bridgewater is a minefield of roads to a stranger, made even worse when it is split in two by a page divider. I could not locate the road out of Bridgewater that I wanted so decided to make my way to North Petherton and cut across country to Bishops Lydeard. I arrived at North Petherton and decided to check my maps which had done a vanishing trick on me because I had not zipped up my pocket. Tried Google maps on my mobile - it did not work probably because it was yet another hottest day of the year with the temperature hovering around the 30C mark, my mobile does not like the heat. After much deliberation I decided to go back in hope of finding my maps or even of finding a shop where I could buy a replacement. Much to my relief, after 2 miles I came across them, they were cherished like lost children. So I celebrated by having lunch at a local pub.

However; my worries were not over I took a wrong turning, which cost me an extra 4 miles and so I eventually came to the B3227 at 16.50 hours with some 35 miles to go.

Welcome to the hills of Devon

I do not know where the actual border is between Somerset and Devon, but I do know that the hills start as soon as you hit the B3227. Undulating, up and down, up and down, amazingly I found that the tiredness in my legs disappeared and the previous 2 weeks dare I say "fitness training" from JOG came into its own. I can honestly say that I thoroughly enjoyed the 3 hours or so ride to my B&B at Bish Mill.

Donation

Many thanks to Jane of Bish Mill, who stopped gardening to give me directions to my B&B and then emptied her pockets to donate a sum of £1.57.

At the End of the Day

I went to the local pub only to find it closed. Fortunately I was carrying energy foods and along with tea and coffee in my room I survived.

Accommodation

Jasmin Cottage, 1 West Mill Cottages, Bish Mill, South Molton, EX36 3QF Telephone: 01769 550855

Day 18 Saturday 20 July 2013 Bish Mill (Devon) to Wadebridge

Distance: 74 miles

Another hot day and what better weather to tackle 2 x 20% hills followed by 1 x 25% climb all within a 3/4 mile stretch of the B3227 before you reach Great Torrington.

I had a good pub lunch break at Langtree, then made my way on to the A388 as far as Milton Damerel to cut cross country to Bude. Originally I intended to follow the coast line from Bude to Wadebridge where I had arranged to meet Sarah who was travelling down from home. The time was 16.00 hours, which was too late for the coastal run so I followed the A39 to Wadebridge which was 27 miles and a few more climbs.

LEJOGGERS

Before I reached Great Torrington I met a very nice couple who had left LE on Thursday. They had found the heat so intensive on Friday that they could only manage 37 miles. They were giving themselves 3 weeks to make JOG I sincerely hope that they did.

Donation

On arriving at the B&B Brian and his wife who were on holiday with their grandchildren donated £20, once more I thank them very much.

Accommodation

Spring Gardens, Bradford's Quay, Wadebridge, PL27 6DB Telephone: 01208 813771

Day 19 Sunday 21 July 2013 Wadebridge to Land's End

Distance: 57 miles

The Finish



A30 to go or not to go?

Another decision was required should I follow my original route cross country on and off the A39, bypass Truro then cross country to Penzance and finally follow the coastal route from Newlyn to Land's End. I estimated that this would require an additional day to complete. The alternative was to go for the jugular and take the A39 and then join the A30 at Indian Queens following it to Land's End. A little foolish you may think, but if I were to leave before 07.00 hours there would be less traffic because:

- It was Sunday morning and the roads would be clear (virtual dead as a dodo up until 10.00hours)
- There would be few if any lorries on the road (this was proved to be correct)
- Traffic would build up with holiday makers who would be turning off the A30 for other resorts. So the further I went then the less busy the road would be (this also proved to be a correct assumption).
- The vast majority of the holiday makers would have travelled on Saturday.

So I made the decision to leave before 07.00 hours and had no problems at all.

On seeing my first Land's End sign post which was 16 miles out; I was a little emotional; but I felt relieved that I was going to complete the challenge, which I did at around 14.00 hours.
