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Brian E. Dembrey (age 55) Date of Trip 14th – 29th May 2004

:

John o' Groats to Lands End

Using A Brompton Folding Cycle

Solo and Unsupported

In Aid Of R. B. L. Poppy Appeal

Amount Raised £1291-13

Start location: John O' Groats

End location: Land's End

Route travelled: C. T. C. B & B Route (in reverse) Most of the way!

Distance travelled: 1,029 Miles

£1,000 Cost at outset: Cycle & Equipment

Total Cost £1,798.89

Day One 14/05/04 Friday

Rose at 07.20 unable to sleep (too excited), had breakfast and took Pat, (my wife) her morning cup of tea, looking out of the bedroom window it was bright and sunny. I returned downstairs and finished packing. I then showered; I had hoped to mow the lawn, but definitely no time. 10.15, Boo (my daughter) arrived and at 11.00, Tony (my son) and his partner Sam arrived, we took a few photo's in the front garden, followed by my lunch of 2 rather well cooked rainbow trout, forgotten in all the excitement! While eating Tony and Sam left accompanied by Boo as Tony was dropping her off at work. Pat made up and packed me a lunch to eat later, while on the train to Scotland.

12 Noon was soon upon us and Pat and I took a slow walk to Bexleyheath station, me pushing the Brompton and luggage, we bumped into Shirley, one of Pats friends who wished me good luck. On getting there Pat bought the tickets for London while I folded the bike, getting a remark from a passer by "that's cute"! No sooner folded (about 30 seconds), the train arrived getting us to London Bridge station at approximately 12.40 changing to the Northern Line underground for Kings Cross, no problems at all with the bike or touring bag, managing to carry both items up and down escalators quite easily, although Pat offered to carry the bag I

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needed to know I could cope when on my own.

We arrived at Kings Cross at 13.10, in plenty of time for the 15.00 to Edinburgh which according to the information board was running on time, time for a 20 pence pee and sit (I said SIT!) in the lounge. So far, so good. Time waiting went quickly. Boarding the train and saying goodbye to Pat brought a tear to my eye! The folded Brompton and touring bag stood quite easily in the suitcase racks provided.

The train departed dead on time and was like a greenhouse until it reached Berwick on Tweed about 18.30, when the sun went in, the train arrived in Edinburgh at 19.14 (7 minutes late due to waiting for a platform at Newcastle)

I alighted here as I needed to change to the 19.40 service for Inverness, again no problems with bike or baggage. Train departed dead on time and I sat back and ate my packed lunch. The train arrived 6 minutes early at 23.09.

I had previously booked a B&B (£20) in Inverness as the connection to Wick was not until 07.20 the following morning. I walked out of the station and straight into a cab (bike in boot) that whisked me there in a couple of minutes, a £2.40 fare (would have cost at least £1 more in Bexleyheath), gave the driver £4.00. Kieran the landlord at "Mokoia" 31 Greig Street was very welcoming, offering tea etc. and the use of a phone to contact home. Although, in my opinion, very sparse, I had the bonus of a double en-suite, being the only one staying that night, perhaps? No trouble with bike, left it in the hallway. Phoned Pat to let her know I'd arrived safely. Set alarm for 05.30 and crashed out at 00.45

Cost's today: Fare's £80

B&B £20

Cab Fare £4

Total £104

Cum. Total £1,104

Day Two 15/05/04 Saturday

No need for alarm, awake at 03.45 after my normal 3 hours sleep. I would have had a shower, but Kieran had mentioned the shower fan wakes him, so I postponed it until 05.40. Itching to get going! Went down to breakfast at 06.00 (cornflakes/brown toast/orange juice). At 06.50 Kieran ran me to the station en-route to pick his wife up from work.

MDK01A B&B RATING: Price 10/10

7/10

Breakfast 4/10

Only a ten minute ride to Inverness station, arrived 07.00, 07.20 train was already waiting on the platform and was completely empty so I had the pick of the seats. The train left on time and was due to arrive Wick at 11.22 (4 hours) will it make it? The weather was bright and sunny at 05.30, but now overcast, still warm though, ideal cycling weather! Smooth as clockwork so far, I hope I'm not speaking too soon, fingers crossed. Scenery much the same from the train, fields and sheep, fields and sheep! Arrived at Wick station 11.21 (1 minute early). After nearly 24hours travelling I will be glad to try out the trusty (I hope!) steed. I rode into town, the bike took some getting used to, this being the first time I'd used it fully freighted. I found Safeway's, folded the bike, put it in the supermarket trolley and pushing it round, bought sandwiches and water for lunch, finding a park bench, I sat to eat, holding everything down as the wind was so strong. I set off after lunch at 12.30 en-route for John O' Groats, a distance of 17 miles, hoping to be there by 14.30 wind permitting. I made pretty good time considering, arriving at 14.20. I booked the start of my journey in the book and had my record sheet stamped at The John O' Groats House Hotel and treated myself to a draught Strongbow cider. I was unable, with three phone calls to get hold of the official signpost photographer, so a man with his wife and dog took a couple of photos for me with my own camera. He and his wife wished me luck. I purchased a few postcards and it took what seemed an eternity to write them out, posting them in the official JOG post box. At 15.35 I zeroed my computer and headed for Brough, my first overnight stop of "THE RIDE" (this was the second and final of the B&B advance bookings that I had made before leaving home) the remainder I would make on route. I arrived at Dunnet Head B&B Brough, a distance of 18 miles, at 17.30. Booking in and dropping my luggage, I made my way, cycling up to Dunnets Head, hoping to catch sight of the Puffins which are usually there in May; unfortunately there were none to be seen. Returning to the B&B at 18.30 I phoned Kyle House B&B in Bonar Bridge to book a room for Sunday night, no trouble at all! An enjoyable evening meal was had at the B&B (pre-booked) and served at 20.00. I phoned Pat and retired early at 21.30.

Cost's today: B&B £40 (inc. Eve. meal & packed lunch)

Postcards: 80p

Total: £40.80

Cum. Total £1144.80

Mileage Today 18m Total 18m (from JOG only)

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Day Three 16/05/04 Sunday

Awake at 04.15, nearly seven hours, a record for me, must have been tired! Looking out of the window, the weather was dry with a low lying mist, sign of another good day I hope. Looking forward to breakfast at 07.30.

A satisfying breakfast, and quite a large packed lunch.

DUNNET HEAD B&B RATING: Price 10/10

Accommodation 10/10

Evening Meal 7/10

Breakfast 7/10

Packed Lunch 10/10

Departed at 08.15 bound for Bonar Bridge. Windy this morning, dry, but no sign of the sun as yet. Although hard going due to the wind, a nice mornings cycling, stopping 13.45 at Betty Hill, after 40 miles for lunch. Really glad I asked for a packed lunch as the café at Betty Hill, being a Sunday, was closed. Diagnosed diabetic in September, I had brought my blood monitor and on testing, my blood sugar was border line, on the low side. I sat and enjoyed my lunch, hoping it would boost my glucose level! After travelling west all morning, my route on leaving (14.15) Betty Hill, now, turns, south, so I will be hoping for more luck with the wind. I am finding The Highlands rather daunting on the CTC route, very lonely, with only the sheep for company. I have now covered a further 27 miles and running low on water. Reaching Altnaharra I come across the first civilisation all day, a massive hotel in the middle of nowhere. The chap in the kitchen is very helpful, filling my 1.5 litre bottle with ice cold water, enough to get me the next 30 miles to Bonar Bridge. At this stage I am running behind schedule, my useless map measurer had worked today's trip out at 73 miles when in fact it's 97. I try to phone the b&b to tell them I will be late, surprise, surprise, no network coverage on my mobile phone. Finding a public call box I contacted Pat at home and got her to do it for me, enabling me to get on. I arrive at Bonar Bridge at 20.55, Mrs. Thompson at The Kyle House Hotel gave me a very warm welcome. She told me I would get an evening meal at the Dunroamin Hotel down in the town, a ten minute walk away. Being a Sunday and late in the evening, meals were no longer being served, the barman was very helpful though and rustled me up a couple of rounds of toasted ham and cheese sandwiches. These washed down with two and a half pints of draught Scrumpy Jack were thoroughly enjoyed. I Wandered back to Kyle House for a good nights kip, phoned Pat and looking forward to breakfast, crashed out at 23.45.

Cost's Today: B&B £21.00

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Eve. Meal £12.00

Total £33.00

Cum.

Total £1177.80

Mileage Today 97m

Total 115m

Day Four 17/05/04 Monday

I awoke at 02.30 but managed to drop back off until 05.00. I showered and went down to a very nice breakfast at 07.30. Settling my bill I was ready to depart at 08.15.

Kyle House B&B Rating: Price 10/10

Accommodation 10/10

Breakfast 8/10

My scheduled stop for today was to have been Braemar, an estimated mileage of 92m but going by the previous inaccuracy of my map measurer this was more likely to be more in the region of 125m, a little out of reach for me in one day!

I decided to head for Inverness about 40 miles, and go from there. Leaving the B&B, I got about 100yards down the road and the heavens opened, I put on my waterproofs, it was wet and windy on and off until I reached Knockbain at about midday, the sun finally coming out, just as the weatherman promised! I removed my waterproofs, this was to be the one and only time I had to use them. Finding a Spa shop in the village I stocked up on chocolate and water. Coming out of the shop I bumped into and started chatting to an 87 year old man doing the end to end the opposite way to me, he was averaging 30 miles per day, wishing him luck I pressed on to Inverness. Arriving at 14.00 the sun was now out with a vengeance, so hot I stripped down to my T shirt and shorts. Asking a cab driver for directions, I eventually found the tourist information centre, folding my bike I joined the queue, while waiting the man in front, looking at my bike, wanted to know if I had hit a wall?, sarcastic git! I had decided another 35-40 miles today would be quite enough and the very helpful assistant suggested Grantown on Spey. Going on his computer he found me a B&B (close to town, a necessity at places not offering an evening meal) and booked it for a fee of £3, unlike the English tourist board who offer this service for free. Grantown on Spey not being on my planned schedule would put me back on track, albeit one full day behind, which would be made up at the end of the second week. It was a little difficult finding my way out of Inverness but I was soon on the right road, which would take me past Culloden

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Battlefield. A few mile's further on, just before Cawdor Castle I was startled when a stag leapt the hedge on my nearside, running across the road. It was still very warm, and going over the moors I was becoming a little concerned as although seemingly going in the right direction I was not coming across any of the place names marked on my map. I eventually waved down what appeared to be a local, and consulting my map together he pointed out that I was in fact about 5 miles further on than I thought, what a bonus! Pressing on again with only sheep and a few rabbits for company I eventually crossed a B road, the next stretch taking me to the A road that would take me straight down into Grantown, just 8 more miles. Arrived Firhall B&B at 19.40 to a warm welcome, no need to fold bike, put in a large lock up garage at rear of main house. Room was very basic but not bad for £19; the landlord suggested J J's in town for an evening meal but along with the fish and chip shop this was closed. I had earlier noticed a restaurant/ takeaway named The Royal; it looked from a distance to be an Indian, not my cup of tea, but turned out to be very British. The place had only been open for 4 days, and although licensed had no cider, making do with a bottle of "Bud" and having a rather large appetite I ordered soup of the day (tomato and onion) to be followed by their mixed grill, what a terrific meal! I can honestly say it was the best mixed grill I've ever eaten, including the black pudding. The meal was so large the chips were served up separately in a cereal bowl, all for under £20. Highly recommended. Finished the evening with a spot of shopping in the late night Co-Op in readiness for tomorrow's trip across the Grampian Mountains. Back to B&B and bed at midnight.

Cost's Today: B&B £19.00

Eve. Meal: £22.00(inc. tip)

Inverness TIC: £03.00

Village shop: £04.00

Co-Op: £04.00

Total: £52.00

Cum Total: £1,229.80

Mileage Today 78m Total 193

Day Five 18/05/04 Tuesday

A far better sleep tonight, a full 6 hours, rising at 06.00 and spending 20 minutes visiting the loo, I think I over indulged the night before. I had now completely lost my appetite for the full Scottish breakfast I had previously ordered. No B&B booked for tonight, hope to sort something out when I reach Braemar, my revised scheduled stop for tonight, at only 47 miles should be a

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snip! Later breakfast today 08.00 giving my appetite time to recover. Well worth the wait, best so far, porridge, full Scottish complete with a cloutie dumpling, although relatively sweet it really set the breakfast off.

Firhall Guest House Rating: Price: 10/10

Accommodation: 9/10

Breakfast: 10/10

Depart for Braemar at 08.50, very slow progress today due to high winds, until reaching Browns Bridge, a very steep hill down, reached a speed of 37mph. with an unbeknown to me hairpin at the bottom, it scared the shit out of me! The brakes were very poor. Carried on to Tomintou calling into the tourist information centre, unfortunately being a small branch they were unable to book me a B&B but assured me I would have no trouble finding one on reaching Braemar. I was soon to encounter a very hard climb up to Lecht Ski Centre (2090' above sea level) when; approaching a bend an overtaking coach coming towards me on the wrong side forced me to jump off and on to the grass verge. I had visions of him going over the edge and taking me with him! Reaching the summit I came across a parked Transit mini bus being used as one of two support vehicles by an army team of 6 cyclists doing a three on three off end to end ride, I assumed this was a non stop relay but the driver said they were stopping each night at different barracks on the way down, not my idea of an end to end, the cyclists would only be covering half the distance. They were quite impressed with me doing the ride on a Brompton Folder though. Reaching Cockbridge there was a great view over the valley and of Corgarff castle. (A 16th century Tower House converted to barracks for government troops after the Battle of Culloden). A memorial stone at the view point has the inscription: "TAKE A MOMENT TO BEHOLD AS STILL SKIES OR STORMS UNFOLD", luckily I had the still skies, While taking photos the army van shot past in hot pursuit of three of their cyclists. I was warned at Tomintou T.I.C. of the steep descent after this point and to be careful! I cycled part of the way down but had to stop as the brake blocks and rims were getting very hot. This was the first time I had pushed a bike DOWN hill but, stuck in my mind was an article I'd read of a front tyre on a Brompton exploding due to a hot rim. No sun or rain today but very slow going due to the wind, at times blowing me to a standstill, at one time even having to pedal down a 1 in 5. On reaching Balmoral, although only a mile round trip I decided to give the Castle a miss after the hard push over the Grampians. From here to Braemar I had the shelter of the trees which eased the wind somewhat arriving at 17.30. Trying two B&B's I had no luck and then I came across one I had on my CTC list, Schiehallion House, here I was offered a double en-suite for £26 which I jumped at. I asked Steve the landlord where I would get a decent evening meal and he recommended Moorfield House Hotel, a bit of a walk but well worth it, the meal of soup, roast of the day and chocolate gateau with ice cream was excellent washed down with two pints of Scrumpy Jack. Walking back to the B&B I was still feeling hungry and was looking forward to breakfast at

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08.00; crashed out at 22.00.

Cost's Today: B&B £26.00

Eve. Meal £15.00

Total £41.00

Cum Total

£1,270.80

Mileage Today 47m Total 240m

Day Six 19/05/04 Wednesday

Woke up at 05.00, although setting my alarm, haven't needed it up to now, I should have left it at home. After showering I went down for breakfast, cereal and cooked, very nice.

Schiehallion House B&B Rating: Price: 10/10

Accommodation: 8/10

Breakfast: 7/10

Departing for Auchterarder 08.30, I was straight into a long hard push up to Glenshee Ski Centre, dry and overcast, still windy but not as bad as yesterday, actually having it behind me for all of 15 seconds! Descending from Glenshee I hit 41 mph; very scary on the folder. Nice ride down into Blairgowrie, popping into the T I C I booked a room in Auchterarder for tonight. Buying some lunch in a little sandwich bar, I sat and ate it in the Town Square Gardens. I departed Blairgowrie 13.15 and after a sunny, uneventful afternoon arrived in Auchterarder (also called The "Lang Toon": The Long Road, the High Street being over a mile long.) at 17.50. The B&B, The Parsonage, was very central being over the post office in the High Street. Although no bike storage, this was not a problem with the folder. Mrs West and her husband the proprietors, were a nice couple and very helpful, he with my route finding and her regards time of breakfast, readily agreeing 07.00. Walking a short distance up the High Street I visited The Glendevon Hotel for an evening meal, and although the meal was nice enough, the barman wasn't, a right miserable git, and they only stocked bottled cider. Next door to the B&B was The Star Hotel, where, still being quite early I decided to have a couple of drinks, a lot more welcoming than The Glendevon and draught Strongbow! The regulars were very friendly, one buying me a pint after I told him what I was doing, thirsty work he said! Promising to send them a postcard from Lands End I left at about 21.15 to pick up some supplies from the late night Co-Op opposite, and then back across the road to The Parsonage and bed, worn out.

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Cost's Today: B&B £24.00 (£4 Donated RBL)

T. I. C. £5.00

Rolls Etc. £3.00

Eve. Meal £10.00

Drinks £4.00

Shopping £5.00

Total £47.00

Cum Total £1,317.80

Mileage Today 70m Total 310m

Day Seven 20/05/04 Thursday

Awake at 04.50 and in for a shower, taking advantage of the scales in the bathroom, I weighed myself, actually lost a pound; A clear dry morning at present. Went down for breakfast, grapefruit followed by full Scottish, very nice too.

The Parsonage B&B Rating: Price: 10/10

Accommodation: 10/10

Breakfast: 10/10

Depart for Peebles/Innerleithen at 08.00, sunny but chilly wind. A relatively easy ride to The Forth Bridge but a right bollox up on the approach, I had stopped reading my map and by relying on the road signs had ended up at the approach road for the M90, having to double back to Inverkeithing to pick up the cycle path, a lesson learned! Reaching Edinburgh it struck me as a dirty place and it was a nightmare to cycle through, I was glad to see the back of it. A good afternoon's riding, through Lothian, arriving in Peebles at 16.30. My intention was to try and make it to Innerleithen a further 10 miles on; popping into the TIC they were unable to find me a B&B there, so I settled for one in town, The Neidpath Inn. A tatty looking pub in the town centre, again no bike storage, so folded it and took to room. As they served meals I decided to eat in tonight, a very wise choice, the steak and ale pie was excellent, washed down with the usual 2 pints of draught Strongbow. Going back up to my room I fell asleep watching the TV, waking at 02.20 to turn it off, falling straight back of.

Cost's Today: B&B £22.50

TIC £5.50

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Eve. Meal £15.00

Shopping en-route £4.00

Total £47.00

Cum. Total £1,364.80

Mileage Today 73m Total 383m

Day Eight 21/05/04 Friday

I awoke to the alarm at 05.00, no sun this morning but dry. I'd been having trouble with dry lips for the last couple of days, this morning they were split and bleeding (too much wind and sun). This luckily was the only ailment suffered, I applied lip salve purchased yesterday; this reduced the soreness quite a bit and contrary to belief, my backside was giving me no trouble at all, I believe, due to a liberal application of "Sudacrem" every morning since the start of the ride. I had asked the barman when booking in for a 07.00 breakfast, he said this shouldn't be a problem but it was now 07.55 and there was no sign of anyone. I checked downstairs and found a cleaner who phoned the landlady; she turned up five minutes later. Full of apologies, and blaming the barman for not passing on the message, she cooked me quite a nice breakfast. Could of done without the delay though, it was nearly 09.00 when I departed for Lazonby.

Neidpath Inn B&B Rating: Price: 10/10

Accommodation: 7/10

Breakfast: 8/10

Quite cold and still windy but nothing like it had been, a nice ride down through The Borders, crossing into England at 15.10 after covering, in total 441 miles. The sun eventually came out and I reached Longtown about 16.00, the TIC, a small set up in the village hall wasn't much help at all. Luckily I had a couple of B&B's on my list for Lazonby, I phoned one, Banktop House and, yes, she had a single, on my way!, only another 30 miles to do, at the end of the day this would make it 90 odd. Because of the time, I stopped en-route at Brampton for a fish and chip supper, a wise move, as on reaching Lazonby at 19.50 there was nothing available. Nice B&B, bike storage in garage, very quaint, not en-suite but a bath available, can't wait! Soon had a good soak, lovely! The local shop closed at 20.00 so I will have to pick up supplies tomorrow. A bit of telly and an early night is in order.

Cost's Today: B&B £25.00

Fish & Chips £5.00

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Total £30.00

Cum. Total £1,394.80

Mileage Today 91m Total 474m

Day Nine 22/05/04 Saturday

I had a good nights sleep, lovely place, my favourite so far. The landlady, Mrs. Carlyle was very accommodating and served up a very nice breakfast dead on 07.00. Departed for Blackburn 07.50.

Banktop House B&B Rating: Price: 10/10

Accommodation: 10/10

Breakfast: 9/10

Slipped up again, half a mile in the wrong direction, I'll never learn, must keep checking my maps! Smashing ride this morning down through the dales, nice and sunny with very little wind, making good progress. Stopping at 13.05 after 47 miles at Cowan Bridge, I bought some sandwiches and bananas at the village stores for lunch. While eating, I took the opportunity, to phone one of the B&B's on my list in Blackburn, The Woodland's Hotel; I booked a single room, no trouble. Pressing on at 13.30, the going was good until reaching High Bentham when the terrain changed dramatically, taking me 3 hour's to cover 13 mile's. I eventually reached Blackburn at 19.40. The Woodland's Hotel turned out to be the local night spot, very rowdy and open until midnight. I don't expect this to keep me awake though. Again no bike storage, so folded, bagged and taken to room. Well out of town, I had to catch a cab to the all-night Asda to get something for tea. Being Sunday the next day, breakfast was not being served until 09.00, well too late for me so I also bought items for then. Catching a cab back, I was out like a light by 22.30, oblivious to the noise emanating from downstairs. I am hoping to be away by 06.00

Cost's Today: B&B £20.00

Lunch £5.00

Cab £9.00

Asda 9.00

Total £43.00

Cum. Total £1,437.80

Mileage Today 88m Total 562m

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Day Ten 23/05/04 Sunday

Getting up at 04.30 I showered and prepared my own breakfast, pork pie, cold baked beans, cup 'o' soup and a dry roll, not up to B&B's standard but worth it for the early start. Repacking my bag I departed for Market Drayton at 06.15.

Woodlands Hotel B&B Rating: Price 10/10

Accommodation: 6/10

Breakfast: N/A

I was glad to be leaving Blackburn, what I saw of it depressed me. It was a hard slog going out of town, but this was rewarded with a nice hill down into Bolton. A dry morning, no wind, quite warm; stripping down to T shirt and shorts at 07.15; By 10.00 the sun was out with a vengeance. Making good progress today I met up with a Manchester Wheeler just north of Middlewich and rode about 7 miles with him to his tea stop at Church Minshull. I declined his offer of 'A Brew' as I wanted to make the most of my early start. On reaching Nantwich I stopped to phone one of the B&B's on my list in Market Drayton, the first I rang, 'Crofton' had a single available which I booked. Pressing on, I arrived there at 16.20. What a result, plenty of room in the garage for the bike and Mrs. Russell, the landlady couldn't do enough for you, even offering to do any washing I might of had. Room not en-suite but I had the use of a bath which I took advantage of straight away. Going downstairs afterwards I was greeted with a jug of iced orange, what a welcome! Mrs. Russell suggested the Talbot Inn; about 10 minutes walk away, along the towpath of The Shropshire Union Canal for an evening meal. Broccoli and Stilton soup, followed by lamb shank, new potatoes and peas; Really nice and good value at under a tenner. Washed down with 2 and ½ pints of Scrumpy Jack. I returned to the B&B to for a bit of TV, watching Heartbeat I kept nodding so I retired upstairs for an early night.

Cost's Today: B&B £20.00

Eve. Meal & Drinks £15.00

Total £35.00

Cum. Total £1,472.80

Mileage Today 77m Total 639m

Day Eleven 24/05/04 Monday

Getting up at 05.00 I took an early morning stroll back down to the canal, this time taking my camera. Returning to the B&B at 06.15, Mrs. Russell was already up and offered to do my breakfast

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straight away; I sat down and enjoyed a full English. She was impressed by the fact that I was doing the ride on a folder and said I was very laid back about it. I thought this part of Shropshire and particularly this B&B would be an ideal touring base for Ironbridge, Telford Etc, so I had no hesitation in booking a 3 night stay over the August bank holiday, this time a double, best take the wife!; I departed for Ross on Wye at 07.30

Crofton B&B Rating: Price: 10/10

Accommodation: 10/10

Breakfast: 10/10

I had a good ride to Ironbridge apart from a road closure down into the village, not too much of a problem though, managing to get by on the pavement. Lovely day again, sunny and hot with a slight breeze; Pushing on to Much Wenlock it was quite a climb up the Ludlow road. Arriving in Ludlow at 13.45, and after 55 miles, I stopped off in Tesco's café for lunch. I had the Mega Breakfast which consisted of, 3 sausage's, 2 egg's, 2 potato waffles, baked beans, a fresh tomato and 2 slice's of toast, great value at £2.99. The Latte coffee I had cost nearly as much! I was grateful for the stop as my right foot was beginning to hurt, the heat was making it swell, and loosening the lace's seemed to cure the problem. My next stop was Leominster where I stopped to phone some B&B's that were on my list for Ross on Wye. The first I tried, The Radcliff, wanted £40, a bit of a rip off I thought, so taking the chance I would get fixed up elsewhere, I declined the offer. The next was The Sunnymount and being a more reasonable £30 I had no hesitation in booking. On to Hereford where the terrain for the last few miles into Ross on Wye were to become quite hilly, after 85 mile's I was feeling quite knackered, never mind, only another 14 to do today! Arriving at 19.15 I asked a young lad for directions to the B&B, he turned out to be very helpful, walking me there and telling me of all the best local place's to eat. Mr. Robertson the landlord at Sunnymount was telling me, as we put my bike in the garage, of 2 riders's doing the End to End who had stopped there the previous day. Once in my room I had a very refreshing shower and then took a short walk up to the town for something to eat. Ending up in The Mailroom's, a Weatherspoon pub I had sausage and mash washed down with 2 pint's of Blackthorn. Not being too keen on Black thorn I crossed the road to The Crown & Sceptre where I had a pint of draught Strongbow. After reading one of their papers and finishing my drink I visited the Costcutter store to purchase supplies for Tuesday. Wandering back to the B&B I felt extremely tired and was asleep as soon as my head hit the pillow. A very good day!

Cost's Today: B&B £30.00

Lunch @ Tesco's £4.09

Eve. Meal & Drinks £13.00

Total £47.09

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Cum. Total £1,519.89

Mileage Today 99m Total 738m

Day Twelve 25/05/04 Tuesday

Up at 06.00, I had a shower and repacked my bag ready for the 'off'. A pretty good breakfast was served at 07.30, departing for Bridgwater at 08.30.

Sunnymount B&B Rating: Price: 7/10

Accommodation: 8/10

Breakfast: 6/10

My original destination planned for today was Cheddar but not only did I need to make up a bit of time, the Brompton bought especially for this trip was slightly overdue it's free 500 mile service. Over the last two years my wife and I have spent quite a bit of time in Somerset tracing my ancestors, while down there over Christmas/New Year I had purchased the bike in St. John Street Cycles, Bridgwater and I was hoping they would give it a quick look over on the Wednesday morning. Still half asleep and at it again, I took the wrong road out of Ross on Wye, this cost me about 15 minutes, after sorting my self out I had a very good ride to English Bicknor. This was soon followed by a very hard climb into The Forest of Dean. The ride down into Chepstow, my very brief visit to Wales, was pretty easy going; again I had a hard climb out to The Severn Bridge. Crossing it was easier than The Forth, it was signposted for cyclist's better, although going over it felt scarier, I can't stand heights or bridges!

Arriving in Bristol and getting around it created a few problems; the CTC route was not very well signposted. Phoning Pat at home, we managed between us to locate and book a B&B in Bridgwater, The Brookland's Hotel, just around the corner from my Great Grandfather's old house at 12 Old Taunton Road.

The climb up into Cheddar Gorge from West Harptree, I considered to be the hardest on the ride so far. Coasting down through the Gorge to the village was well worth the hard work getting to the top though. A further 20 odd miles should see me at my destination. Arriving at Brooklands at 19.45 I had to fold the bike as there was no storage. Today, at 102 mile's, would be the longest of the trip and I had thoroughly enjoyed it. After settling in my room and having a well earned shower and change of clothes I hit the town for a meal and a few cider's. I went into Annie's Bar just across the road from the B&B where I had Ham and

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Cheese Pasta Bake and a couple of ciders, delicious! Leaving Annie's I tried another two or three pubs sampling the various ciders they had on offer. Returning later, a little worse for wear, to the B&B, I managed through the self inflicted haze to locate my room and bed, flopping down and passing out almost immediately.

Cost's Today: B&B £30.00

Eve. Meal £12.00

Eve. Drink's £14.00

Total £56.00

Cum. Total £1,575.89

Mileage Today 102m Total 840m

Day Thirteen 26/05/04 Wednesday

I had a bit of a lie in this morning as a visit to the cycle shop was not possible until after 09.00. I had the night before booked a 08.30 breakfast. When settling up afterwards, I had quite a chat with Mrs. Hill the landlady about my family history research in the area. I departed at 09.15 for SJS Cycles, about 2 minutes away.

Brookland Hotel B&B Rating: Price: 7/10

Accommodation: 6/10

Breakfast: 6/10

I hadn't pre-booked my visit to the cycle shop and was impressed by the attention I received. Dave the chief mechanic got on to checking the bike over straight away. I took this opportunity to contact a few B&B's on my list, and although unable to sort one in Great Torrington, my destination for today, I did arrange one for Friday night in Penzance, being Bank Holiday weekend I didn't like to leave it too long before making a booking. Dave had completed the service in 50 minutes, making minor adjustments to the gear cable's, adjusting the head set which he considered a touch too tight and replacing the left hand crank which due to a machining fault was running too close to the bottom bracket. No charge was made and with best wish's all round I left the shop at 10.30. The climb into The Quantock Hills was very hard going. Reaching Bishop's Lydeard at 12.15 I stopped to purchase some chocolate bars as emergency rations for my trip over The Brendon Hills and Exmoor. It was hard going all afternoon, hill after hill, a lot worse than Scotland I thought! Still unable to get hold of a B&B I arrived in Great Torrington at 19.45. I found a B&B in the town with a NO VACANCIES sign in the window, hoping they might be able to suggest somewhere I knocked at the door. The woman that

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answered advised me to try the West of England pub a 2 minute walk away cutting through the church yard adjacent to her house. Pushing the bike straight into the bar of the pub I enquired as to the availability of a room, anything! As by this time I was completely knackered with a capital K, a double en-suite was offered, I accepted straight away, didn't even worry about the price I was that glad to have found somewhere. While folding the bike a regular at the bar was so impressed by what I was doing, parted with a fiver for sponsorship. I had arrived just in time for last orders on an evening meal; I promptly made my choice and then carried my bike and luggage up to my room. Returning to the bar I sank an ice cold pint of Strongbow, beautiful, after, although a shorter day miles wise, a very hard one. After a three course meal, soup, T. Bone Grill, Spotted Dick and Custard and a couple of more pints, I said my goodnights and retired to my room. I had no idea how much all this was costing as everything went on the slate.

Cost's Today: B&B £35.00

Chocolate £3.00

Eve. Meal & Drinks £21.00

Total £59.00

Cum. Total £1,634.89

Mileage Today 70m Total 910m

Day Fourteen 27/05/04 Thursday

Awoke to alarm at 06.00, showered etc. going down to breakfast at 08.00. After eating I went to the bar to settle the bill, expecting the worse, I was pleasantly surprised when told the total was only £56. My destination for today was Newquay and I departed at 08.45.

West of England B&B Rating: Price: 8/10

Accommodation: 8/10

Breakfast: 8/10

Setting off I hit hill's straight away, surprise, surprise! Progressing slowly I crossed the Tamar into Cornwall at 11.15, where the road surface immediately changed for the better. Pressing on to Bude I visited the TIC where they booked me a B&B in Newquay, unlike the Scottish; there is no charge for this service. Leaving Bude at 13.00 I followed the coast road to Widemouth Bay where I diverted to the A39 due to the very high winds. The A39 proving to be just as windy. Stopping at Wainhouse Corner I bought sandwiches and more bottled water for lunch. I am making very slow progress today due to the continual headwind

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since entering Cornwall. By late afternoon the wind dropped a little and the hills became a little easier. I arrived at Trewinda Lodge, my Newquay B&B at 19.40. Mark, the landlord very kindly agreed to lay on an early (05.00) continental style breakfast for me after I explained I needed an early start to enable me to finish the last leg of my journey on schedule. Showering and going down town, I was too late for anything to eat, unless you wore a SOMBRERO!—not my cup of tea! I finally ended up in Burger King for last orders, YUK! I did find a shop earlier though, that did mail order Cornish Cream, where I had 4 pots sent home to Pat, she loves it. Walking back to the B&B I stopped of at a late night supermarket to purchase supplies for my final day.

Cost's Today: B&B £22.00

Lunch £5.00

Eve. Meal £5.00

Supplies £5.00

Cream £8.00

Total £45.00

Cum. Total £1,679.89

Mileage Today 71m Total 981m

Day Fifteen 28/05/04 Friday

Up sharp at 05.00 I went down to the dining room, Mark had done me proud. On a table in the corner was a miniature fridge with milk, orange juice and butter inside, along with an electric toaster and bread bin, cereal etc. on the side. This made a welcome change from the usual full English. I departed at 06.30 bound for Penzance.

Trewinda Lodge B&B Rating: Price 10/10

Accommodation (very small): 5/10

Breakfast: 10/10

Although overcast this morning, I was down to my T shirt by 07.00 working up quite a sweat on the hills. Coming off the CTC route at this time, I stuck to the A30, although a lot busier, more direct and quicker. After Quite a good ride I arrived in Penzance at 09.30, this meant I was back on schedule and would be in Land's End today as planned. Visiting the station I booked a seat on the 09.40 to Paddington for the following morning. I also took the time to pop into the TIC to check on the location of the B&B I had previously booked. Starting off on the coast road towards Land's End it was still overcast and was starting to rain, or so I

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thought, until realising it was in fact sea spray! I should have stuck to the A30 because after turning down a wrong lane I ended up in Mousehole, a beautiful little place, but a hill I could have done without, coming out of it. Eventually arriving at Land's End at 12.00 on the dot, it was rather an anti-climax, no cheers, no claps, just a coach, off loading a cargo of foreign tourists, straddling the finish line and getting in the way. I felt really good though, GOOD! Having my photograph taken at the "SIGNPOST", the photographer was so impressed with the folding bike that he would display a copy of the picture.

I spent the next 2 hours writing postcards, buying souvenirs and filling in the hotel record book where to my delight I found the six soldiers that had passed me on the ski slopes of Scotland had only signed in a couple of hours before me. They covered 970 miles, 59 less than me, and in truth only half of their total mileage was cycled by the rider's, as it was done in relays, three on, three off. All this with two support vans, made me feel quite proud of my achievement. I departed at 14.00 for the 10 mile ride back to Penzance. I found the B&B, Torre-Vene, quite easily; a stones throw from the station, at the top of a hill. Turning up at 15.30 couldn't have been better, Mr. & Mrs. Ash, the proprietors had just returned from shopping. Although a very nice couple, the house reminded me of Bate's Motel out of the film Psycho, perched on a bank, tall and ugly. Shown to a room at the very top of the house and thankful there wasn't a sound of a creaking rocking chair I settled in. Going down the town later, I had an Angus pie meal in a Weatherspoon pub, it wasn't too bad, but still feeling quite hungry, I walked to the sea front where I bought large "Cornish" pasty and chips. This turned out to be the most disgusting meal I had all fortnight, even the pigeon's turned their nose's up and walked off. I'm afraid Penzance, in my opinion, hasn't changed a lot since my first visit with Pat about 30 year's ago, at the risk of offending, I still think it's a dump. On the way back to the B&B I stopped off to buy supplies for my train journey home.

Cost's Today: B&B £25.00

Eve. Meal's £15.00

Supplies £4.00

Train Fare £60.00

Total £104.00

Cum. Total £1,783.89

Mileage Today 48m (not including ride back to Penzance) Total 1.029m

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Day Sixteen 29/05/04 Saturday

I had a very bad night's sleep, in a damp and musty bedroom. In the shower, although I didn't get slashed with a knife, I was subjected to intermittent freezing and scolding. Returning to my bedroom I was entertained by "Streaker's" in the rooms of an adjacent B&B, not a pretty sight so early in the morning. Only another 25 minutes until breakfast. This was truly a weird place, on every landing there was hundred's of toilet roll's stacked floor to ceiling, so I wasn't that surprised when I entered the dining room to find it the same, this time with provision's, dozen's and dozen's of luxury chocolate log's, squashes, and slab cake's, you name it, it was there!. Were they expecting World War 3 or a very busy season? Surprisingly quite a good breakfast was served up; the fried bread was first class. Having settled my bill on arrival, I said my goodbyes. Mrs. Ash said I was welcome to stay at anytime. I left for the station at 08.25, couldn't get on my bike quick enough!

Torre-Vene B&B Rating: Price 8/10

Accommodation 5/10

Breakfast 6/10

Entertainment Value 8/10

Coasting down the hill from the B&B to the station, I could see a train waiting at the platform, on getting closer; over the Tannoy it was announced to be the 08.34 to Paddington. If I could catch this it would be a bonus. Cycling hard and straight on to the platform I had just minute's to spare. The guard stopped me and asked if I had a reservation for the bike, only they had their quota. Assuring him I didn't need one, I don't think he could believe his eye's at the speed of which I folded and bagged mine. Climbing aboard, the train pulled away within seconds, phew! Saved myself over an hour. Pat was due to meet me at Paddington so I phoned to let her know I was on an earlier train. She seemed to be slightly put out when I told her; I was to find out later why. She needed all the time available to prepare a surprise welcome home party she had planned for me. Settling back for the 5 hour train journey I tested my blood glucose level, it read 14.2 (max. 9), no chance of burning it off this morning. Arriving at Paddington on time at 13.40 I met up with Pat, catching the tube to Victoria and then a train onto Bexleyheath. We reached home at about 15 30, on turning into the top off our road I was greeted to cheers and claps from my 7 grandchildren, my son Tony and his partner Sam, who along with Pat had worked really hard preparing my homecoming, unfortunately Boo and Simon her fiancé couldn't be there, having gone on holiday the same day. What a spread! A fantastic end to a great fortnight, or so I thought until I read the message on the cake, it read:

Well Done Brian

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JO' G—

1e May 2004

M&S had cocked it up! Dipsticks!

Cost's Today: Buffet Car £5.00

Fare's £10.00

Total £15.00

Cum. Total £1,798.89

Summary

Equipment

Most Useful: The Brompton, what a bike, well impressed! Far more comfortable than the Carrera mountain bike I used when doing "THE RIDE" in 98. And of course a lot more convenient.

Least Useful: Map Measurer, found to be grossly inaccurate, do not waste your money! Use a piece of string.

Place's

Most Liked: Maulds Meaburn Yorkshire.

Least Liked: Blackburn Lancashire

Most Irritating Aspect on Ride

4 Wheel Drive vehicles with personalised number plates being driven by moron's on single track roads in Scotland. Off road vehicle's they may be, the drivers are more content sticking to the tarmac, forcing meagre cyclists on to verges and into ditches.

Plans

Having now done "The Ride" south to north in 98 and now north to south, my next intention is cycling Bexleyheath/Land's End/John O' Groat's/Bexleyheath, saves on train fares, I can't wait!