

2008 JOGLE - John O'Groats to Lands End 27th June 2008 to ?????.

Many of you reading this will have read my previous cycling story, if not you might like to first.



www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~kroberts/barford/pdf/graham_lees.pdf Just like the Harry Potter book series, one story follows from another (and I too hope to be very rich when I have used enough printer ink).

Having done the “End to End” once, I really have nothing to prove to anyone, and still enjoy regular cycle rides. Colin Igoea is Sales Director of Bridge Motors and has supplied all of my company’s vehicles and indeed all my cars at home for longer than I can remember. During a conversation in 2007 when I was in the Banbury dealership he was telling me about his trip cycling from London to Brighton. To cut a long story short I suggested he should undertake a real challenge like End to End, and I would be happy to do it again with him. He agreed and we shook hands upon it. From this point we were morally committed.

The last trip was very disappointing at the end, as John O’Groats is a little remote, sparsely populated (only by people with webbed feet and the occasional tourist), but most importantly a bloody long way from home. For these reasons I suggested going north to south against the flow of the many who successfully achieve this mammoth task every year. So what if the prevailing wind is South Westerly, a little wind should not be a problem. Oh how wrong I was!

With me having done the trip once, Colin was very interested in picking my brains on what to take, training regimes etc. A certain amount of banter and general piss taking both ways ensued. My bike, whilst a full suspension mountain bike, is made of lightweight aluminium and carbon fibre so is relatively light. Colin was a little worried by this as I had repeatedly told him that every ounce hurts on uphill climbs. Colin decided to buy a new bike, and proud of his new steed emailed me to tell me all about it. He finished his email with “you will not see me for dust.” I had recently take my bike into Mike Vaughn cycles in Kenilworth for a service, and replied in that vein but also let Colin know that I had my crank and chain and gears replaced with a special alloy of titanium and helium called unobtanium, which, whilst incredibly strong, is actually lighter than air, so the whole bike only weighs a matter of 15 ounces!

The weather in the winter and early spring was, as usual, cold and wet. So to keep the training up, an exercise bike was purchased from Gym World, who also donated £100 towards the sponsorship – game on I guess.

My chosen charity for this trip is the Warwickshire and Northamptonshire Air Ambulance, WNAA. We arranged a trip up to Coventry airport for a photo session. On the chosen day, we arrived were subjected to strip search and interrogation before being issued with a pass. Having been through that rigmarole, we were most disappointed to find she was out on a shout. We had a tour of the operations room to view the facilities including the famous Bat Phone (yes really!)



It was not too long before we heard on the radio that she was on her way back, and very shortly we heard the sound of G-WNAA, the fastest air ambulance currently in use in the UK. As she arrived, a little show boating with



the door open before landing presented us with some lovely action photos.

We were able to get a few photos and chat with the crew before they were sent off with 2 more shouts. I did not have time to explain how I had managed to break their simple but so effective route planner, fortunately!

A month before the ride, on Spring Bank Holiday Monday, Colin and I decided to have a training day. A trip to London on the train and ride back to Oxford was the plan. It is always essential to have a plan – that way you can always change it! This occasion was no different, and the long term weather was not looking good as we approached T-Day. A massive cold front was located right on top of our route, with heavy downpours and strong winds.

A phone call in the early morning of T-Day to Colin led to a last minute change of plan. Instead we set off in the general direction of Northampton from Colin's house. The wind was in our face and 20 gusting 25mph. Soon it was raining more on than off, and the final insult, a puncture. This puncture on my bike allowed us to try out my puncture repair plan of a spare inner tube and CO2 inflator. This worked incredibly well, and we were on our way again within 10 minutes.

We managed to find the cafe at the planned turning point, but it was closed. So we headed for a local Tesco for a breakfast. This particular Tesco was somewhat disappointing as it had no cafe! After refreshments of cold sandwiches and flapjack we headed back to Brackley. The wind (and rain) was now pushing us along and we made good time back. Over a cup of coffee we discussed the days 45mile trip in the wind and rain, and I stupidly said to Colin "That is the worse you will ever experience. If you can cope with that, then we will have no problem on the trip." Oh how wrong I was (Again)!

Initially I was building up the training, but towards the end it tailed off due to holidays and other trips. In the last month, I managed to only achieve some 30% of the days on my bike. BIG mistake, but more of that later.

The overall plan was to crate the bikes up on the Monday 23rd June, and send them to the Queens Hotel I had booked in Wick. They should arrive a day or so before us as we were to fly up on the Thursday ready for an early start on the Friday. A taxi up to John O'Groats and cycle back to Queens (which was on our route south) for a hearty Scottish breakfast seemed like a good idea, before continuing our journey as far as Bonar Bridge to complete the first days 90 or so gentle miles.

Colin duly dropped his bike off on Monday morning, I brought mine in and the crate was sourced from a local supplier – what could possibly go wrong? Probably easier to say what went right!

Our first problem was the crate was not ready until after 4.00pm. Then the spare Vivaro van in the stores was found to be full of lift equipment. This was solved by putting box on top of Alan Legg's car and drive VERY slowly (hopefully we will not be featured on POLICE CAMERA ACTION). Box back at office, no problem, can load it in the morning and it would still be in Wick before us.

Next problem was the carrier, who decided that it would be charged on volume not weight, so cost would be circa £600.00. Solution was to change carrier to Parcel Force, size was not a problem as long as no single dimension exceeded 2m and for approx 30kg it would be around £50.00. Result (or so we thought). I had a teleconference booked at 10.00, and a witness test in the afternoon. No problem just an early start.

With an early start and some assistance the box was loaded with bikes secured and protected. Some obvious things that would likely to attract the attention of the airport security, like water carriers were deposited in the crate before sealing.

The weight had now increased to 45kg and Sharon Moggach rang Parcel Force to book our “about 30kg” parcel, and was told 30kg was the maximum, otherwise it would be on another tariff and that would be £450.00 please. Oh Bugger!

Alan was a star and burst into action like superman (he too likes to wear his underpants on the outside). The crate was broken down, bikes dismantled and with the aid of cardboard and bubble wrap set about producing three parcels that fell within the very specific size and weight criteria we now knew (but no one could be bothered to tell us before). The time was getting critical and only a few minutes before the van arrived to collect, Alan finished this unplanned task.

I was blissfully unaware of this until all the works were done, and had they not been completed so skilfully by Alan; we would have had a major problem in the start of the trip. Unfortunately “Oh Bugger” was to appear a few more times yet!

Day 0. Home to John O’Groats

I had left the office at midnight the previous night trying to clear some outstanding work issues. Colin arrived spot on time and we left Barford for East Midlands Airport. We checked in for our flight to Wick, via Aberdeen. There was a little confusion at check in, however we managed to check the bags in for the whole trip. The bags had to be checked in as there were now a number of tools required for the reassembly operation in Wick. The flight was in a 27 seat turboprop, but even so there was still in flight catering that was free. Take heed Mr Michael O’Leary, passengers like to be treated as people not cargo! Colin was visibly nervous, obviously more used to larger commercial airliners.



Arrival in Aberdeen was on time, and the pilot frightened the living daylights out of Colin with a text book but still scary cross wind landing. Wait till I get you into a plane with me Colin!!

The big disappointment was that the next leg was somewhat late in the afternoon, and we had a 4 hour stop over. If you have ever been to Aberdeen airport you will know

what a huge disappointment this was to us. We were told we could not check in for the final leg if we planned to leave the airport. So we checked in anyway.

Once we had, there were no boarding card police present to stop us leaving, so we looked at catching the bus to the city for an hour or so. Having just missed one bus, the timing of the next one was such that we would spend most of the afternoon on two buses and no real time in Aberdeen city after all. Nothing else for it so we went to the food court, for below average food with an above average price tag, as is all too often the case with a captive audience.

Three hours later, we went through security and into the Eastern Airways lounge to wait for our flight. Again take note budget airlines, a little customer service costs little and is massively appreciated by the weary traveller. We boarded a similar 27 seater, this time it was quite busy with nearly half the seats occupied. The flight to Wick was short and uneventful. As we taxied up to the terminal building, there were snow ploughs parked on the apron. Perhaps an indication of the wild weather and the short summer in the remote north of Scotland.

Another thing noticeable was that it was daylight till nearly 11.00 pm and started getting light at 03.00. (Conversely I have been working up in Aberdeen in the winter and it is dark at 3.30 pm). Receiving an email to the Blackberry from Sharon to confirm the bikes were in Wick was a huge relief.

We arrived, retrieved our luggage, headed out of the airport to get a taxi. So remote it is that unless you have pre booked one, there isn't one. Hey ho we needed the exercise so took a 15-20 minute walk to the hotel.

The bikes were in the dining room and we were very politely asked to have them moved before breakfast. No problem as we wanted to build them ready for an early start. So after booking a taxi for 6.00am, we set about unpacking and filling to the brim their two wheelie bins with copious quantities of bubble wrap and cardboard. Oh Bugger! The seat post clamp on my bike was missing. A quick call to Alan to ask which package or what had he taped it to. He had left it on the frame. We carefully checked all the packaging, and then refilled the two wheelie bins. We checked the dining room and route between there and the car park all to no avail.

We cancelled the taxi and looked at our options; the best was the Red Spot bike shop in Wick only 150 yards up the road. At 6.30 in the evening of course it was closed, and I knew (as they packaged my bike up after my last trip and sent it to my home) they are not the earliest starters in the mornings. The Hotel rang the owner at home and he came in at 7.30 in the evening to open up especially for us – what a star. He even recognised my bike “I remember this one, it's got a suspension isolation switch on the handlebars.” After 30 minutes of frantic searching of spares, and, even all the bikes in stock for sale, we drew a blank. Every other size possible, apart from one to fit mine.

There was another bike shop in Thurso, but not open till the morning. A Jubilee clip as a temp measure? Bless him, the bike shop owner went home and fetched one.

As expected the clip could not be tightened enough to provide the necessary force. Despite my efforts he would not take anything for obviously putting himself out for us.

Time for some food and lateral thoughts. As we ate our evening meal we investigated our options. Opposite was a garage that did MOT's and the like, an exhaust clamp of the right size would be a bodge that even Julian Lloyd would be proud of. Completely exhausted we retired to bed. Tomorrow would be another day!

Day 1. John O'Groats to Bonar Bridge

We headed down for breakfast, and Colin made the classic mistake. Upon being asked what he would like for breakfast "Full English, please" he replied. "Wrong country my friend", the waiter replied with a grin. Good job we were not in Glasgow.....

After two full *Scottish* breakfasts, we had a wander around the local area. Nothing was likely to open till about 9.00, despite what signs may say. At 8.30 the garage opposite opened, and I explained my predicament. He asked if I had my bike with me. No, but within 2 minutes I reappeared with it. A couple of minutes later, an exhaust clamp was fitted, tested and proved to be the answer to our prayers. Time to book a taxi again.



The taxi arrived in minutes, and, after securing both bikes on a rack we were heading north to the shrine of the LEJOG God, John O'Groats. All we had to do was cycle a mere 950 miles south to the shrine of the JOGLE God over the next 10 days.



As it was raining we donned waterproofs, popped to the public toilets to suitably grease the undercarriage for the days cycling. There were surprisingly no raised eyebrows when 2 guys disappeared into the gents with a tin of Vaseline! After a couple of photo's we headed south into a gentle 12mph wind. Colin's gears were causing some distress so we stopped a couple of hundred yards up the road outside someone's house. We then met the ONLY miserable and unhelpful chap in our trip. We were asked to move up the way a hundred yards or so as we were disturbing his dogs! A minor adjustment was made until a more permanent fix could be made at the first proper stop.

Tesco's have now started a takeover bid for Wick to add to its huge empire, and the newly opened Tesco provided our first fuel stop of the trip. We met a Kiwi, who was on his way back south to Inverness having just completed the end to end the other way. After correctly adjusting the gear cable on Colin's bike and suitably refreshed we headed south. The countryside in the north of Scotland is very sparsely populated, but there were many distractions of End to Enders going the other way. Lots of waving and encouragement. Far more interesting going this way as you see loads of other people in cars, bicycles etc. We saw a large group of Mini's, several Ford Anglia's as well as many cyclists on all sorts of bikes including a tandem.

From my last trip I remembered the Berridale bit 1100ft down to almost sea level we achieved 42mph on the downhill stretch of exhilaration, followed by a LOT of walking on the following 2 mile uphill bit!

Due to the late start around 10.00 am we were perhaps going a little faster than planned, and by mid afternoon the lack of training was starting to show. I knew from past experience my legs were starting to turn to jelly, and if I allowed that to happen it would likely put me out for a day or so I backed the pace off a little.

We also took the slightly longer but flatter route to Bonar Bridge to avoid the last major hill of the day. The days figures were not too bad with 7h27m travelling, covering 91.3 miles giving an average speed of 13mph and 1h51m of rest. Not bad for a day with a number of showers, and a headwind for most of the day.

Day 2. Bonar Bridge to Fort William

I normally get going early, but, I allowed Colin a leisurely breakfast before our start. This was partially as I was knackered from the day before, and partially as we were still in a very remote area and food stops would likely to be at best sporadic at worst almost nonexistent. We had only travelled a mile or so before the rain hit. Oh Bugger! We rapidly donned waterproofs under the nearest tree. To make things worse the headwind had increased and was often closer to 20mph than the forecast 12. Within a couple of miles we were on a fairly major climb, and I recall from my trip the other way there was a fantastic viewpoint overlooking the bridge approx $\frac{3}{4}$ up the hill. Trouble is

with the low cloud and rain we could see bugger all! Last time a lot of the enjoyment was looking at the stunning countryside. When you have your head down with gritted teeth into a headwind or rain there is no sightseeing! The B9176 takes you up to 1200 ft on a couple of occasions and the ONLY plus point was the usual flies were minimal due to the wet weather.

Into the wind we would often sit in the others slipstream to get a little respite and lower the effort. This worked well most of the time, but Colin did suffer in my slipstream on one occasion where I tried a little jet propulsion courtesy of the previous night's food to combat the headwind. Funnily enough he did not follow so close after that bout of flatulence!

We called into the Loch Ness Visitor centre after a particularly satisfying descent into Drumnadochit where 44.7mph was reached. Colin was visibly suffering exhaustion, and thankfully for us both the undulating terrain along the shore of Loch Ness and onwards following the Caledonian Canal was not too bad.



He did however manage to hit a wall with a glancing blow on a corner, and as a motorcyclist I wonder how he managed to get away with that without the inevitable tumble. We pressed on with somewhat reduced speed as we did still have the headwind.

The approach to Fort William again involves a lengthy climb, and this again took its toll. As we cycled into Fort William Colin was on his last legs, now even the slightest incline was causing a stop.

The first two hotels had been pre-booked prior to the trip, now we were relying on Mission Control in the form of Sue Fletcher to arrange accommodation, based on actual progress and expected final session at a point around mid afternoon. As it was Saturday Mission control had subcontracted the task to the current Mrs Lees who booked us into the Alexandra hotel in Fort William.

As a base for nutters doing 3 peaks, End to Enders, hill walkers etc it struck me that there were NO overweight people at all staying there, until we arrived anyway. Checking in was refreshing, and we were out of the wind and rain for pretty much the first time all day. Room 206 turned out to be a double bed. Although Colin and I were friends I did not think we were that close, so less than amused with Céleste's joke I returned to reception to change to a twin!

After refreshing showers, we went down to eat in the bar. We then met the other two End to Enders staying in the hotel. The couple had cycled from Lands End and had married at Gretna Green on the way. I though Céleste and I had been bonkers going skiing for a honeymoon, but this really would have been much more physically demanding than ours.

The wind and rain had taken its toll on the day and we clocked up 99.5 miles in 8h24m in the saddle with 2h15m of rest. The average speed today was a lowly 11.85mph

Day 3 Fort William to Glasgow

At breakfast the two of us looked out to partially blue sky and the sun was out. The wind was due to pick up in the afternoon and significant rain was expected. By the time we had extracted the bikes, donned the still damp cycling clothes it was p***ing down. We waited for 20 minutes or so to see if the rain would subside; it did briefly slow, but then came back even heavier. Oh Bugger! Nothing for it but we set off into the rain, into the wind, and the muck off the roads being picked up on the front wheel to be sprayed in your face just to make it even worse.

The first stop was at the base of Glen Coe, for chocolate and Red Bull. At times we were down to 6mph on the flat, so strong was the wind, and the rain had been constant and heavy all the way. Oh Bugger! Today was going to be hell. No matter how high a hill is, or how steep it is, there is always a top to it and a descent the other side. The wind however is a different matter; it tends to be in the same direction all day, coming from the direction we are heading.

I recall from my last trip that the wind tends to be funnelled by the hills, and actually goes up Glen Coe, so although wet we were delighted to actually have the wind assist us with the 1200 ft climb up Glen Coe. From my trip last time I recall this as being the most spectacular part of the trip, however on this occasion we preferred just to get on and up the hill. We got to the top, battled with the even stronger wind (now back in our face again) on the top, past the Bridge of Orchy to The Green Wellie Stop at Tyndrum for a late but VERY welcome Lunch. Although the wind had increased the rain had at least subsided for a brief while.

We contemplated setting off with waterproofs removed, and decided against it, and sure enough within 15 minutes or so after the restart, yet more heavy rain. We started the long and gentle drop down to Loch Lomond after Crianlarich. As we were dropping down through the pine forest some respite from the wind was gained by the shielding effect of the trees. Following the shore of Loch Lomond to Tarbet to a small tea shop where I had stopped last time having breakfast outside overlooking the Loch. Not so this time we went in sat down and looked at the puddle forming under our table wondering if we would be thrown out. The waitress came over and said in a lovely

Scottish accent “Och you’ve no been cycling in that monsoon have you?” Indeed we had, and what was worse we had about another three hours of cycling in it too!

Much of the remainder of the journey was in the rain and soon we were on relatively main roads as we travelled the length of the main part of Loch Lomond and then turned towards the Erskine Bridge. The cycle path on the first half of the bridge is slightly uphill, and with the now 30mph headwind was undertaken at little more than walking pace in our lowest gears, and the expected freewheel down turned out to be a pedal hard and get to 6mph! By now we only had 6 miles or so to our goal, the Holiday Inn Express at Glasgow airport. Colin had left his sunglasses (rain goggles) on the other side of the bridge, neither us had the energy or inclination to go back even for less than half a mile, and we decided to press on and Colin would buy some at the airport.

The last few miles seemed to take for ever, not helped by the fact that I could not find the way from the footbridge to the road below; however we arrived at the hotel - eventually.

We did manage to cover 101.1 miles in the most appalling conditions I have ever cycled in. I have no idea how long it took as yet, how long we took as breaks as I completely forgot to take the data from the GPS before clearing it the following morning! I suspect we would have been around 10mph average, but this can be got from the tracker later.

Day 4 Glasgow to Dumfries

The wind is light, and it’s not raining. I was rather hoping it was not a dream, and this was real. I had to pinch myself, but thankfully it was not a dream. We headed out of Glasgow through Paisley. Even with the suspension switched on, the road was very bumpy, full of potholes and therefore very uncomfortable, so Colin’s rigid frame must have been painful. We failed to find the start or the end of the cycleway, that cuts out a lot of the roads, but it was not long before we were out in the countryside, much to our great relief. We were just on the outskirts and a shout from behind alerted me to the fact that Colin’s chain had been practicing different types of knots around his frame. This took a little while to unravel and the baby wipes were used to great effect to remove the huge amount of dirty oil from Colin’s hands.



Routing via Kilmarnock, Cumnock, those who study the weather will know that often the wind increases during the day and dies off during the evening. Today was no different and before long the wind picked up. The terrain was a relatively gentle, and the last stretch into Dumfries the downhill gradient almost compensated for the headwind. This welcome relief was celebrated by an afternoon feast!

Anyone who has cycled a long distance knows the final 20 miles are the worst. It matters not how many miles you have already covered, but every pedal rotation is another twist of the knife. You start to count the miles down, and the final couple of miles seem to take forever.

Colin was suffering more than I, and the final few miles were taken at little more than walking pace. The Travelodge on the Gretna road out of Dumfries was our oasis in the desert of JOGLE land.

After showering and dressing for dinner (tee shirts and normal shorts) we headed for the Little Thief on site for refreshment. What followed was like a remake of Monty Python's cheese shop. Eventually we did find that they did have at least one dish that could be cooked, so we dined on a fine meal of Corsican Writhing Cheese that was more than a little runny!

Colin did not want his lollipop, so I had his and another two managed to fall into my pocket for later.

The day's figures reflect the headwind, and with 8h6m in the saddle 95.4 miles were covered. We achieved a moving average of only 11.8. 3h1m were taken in breaks and the highest speed achieved was 35.8.

Day 5 Dumfries to Kirkby Lonsdale

Surprisingly enough, the Little Thief had obviously had a major re-stock overnight as we had our choice of the whole menu for breakfast.

Suitably refreshed the bikes were wheeled out in the sunshine, and for once we actually had a slight tailwind. We chose the minor road and started to enjoy the pace as we headed towards England. We stopped at Gretna for the now compulsory second breakfast.

Having got across the border, we opted for the straighter slightly less undulating route via Carlisle. The slight tailwind then tuned into a slight headwind. I took the opportunity to call into a site where we installed a lift last year. As they owed money we managed to shame them into providing very welcome refreshments!

We continued through the borders and



were climbing towards Shap. We were pleasantly surprised at Shap the climb was only up to 850ft. After a refreshment stop we headed south, looking forward to a gentle descent to Kendle. Oh Bugger. As we left Shap, there was a sign saying Shap Summit 2



miles. The slow long climb up to Shap Summits peak of 1400ft was painful, and as usual into the wind! When we finally reached the top we spent a few minutes with a couple of guys heading the opposite way. They were travelling with no luggage (they had two sets, being sent from accommodation to the day afters accommodation. Clever idea, and with their carbon framed special

racing bikes, the water bottles was half the weight of the bikes. With no weight to carry and a roaring tailwind they were covering 150 miles per day. The other guy at the top was going our way was travelling a similar daily distance to us, but was planning for Kendal that day. Mission Control had booked the Whoop Hall at Kirkby Lonsdale for us, and the lure of the sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi was actually pushing our weary minds and bodies along. Having said that there was a degree of assistance from Sir Isaac Newton as we descended from our 1400ft plateau to Kendal's lowly 200ft!

From Kendal with only 20 miles to go, and we entered the "last 20 miles" syndrome for the 5th day in succession. As we were now in the Yorkshire Dales the terrain was continually in a climb or descent. This was not really ideal especially whilst in the last reserves of stamina, and Colin was certainly suffering hugely. Having said that, so was I. Final 2 miles took nearly 2h30mins and when we finally arrived at the hotel, the rain started.

The hotel was absolutely fantastic, and frankly the £35.00 each for B&B including the use of facilities was a huge, but welcome surprise. We did not bother with the traditional shower and went straight to the health suite for a shower, sauna, steam room and Jacuzzi. Funnily enough neither of us fancied the well equipped gymnasium!

All too soon we had to leave the wonderful facilities and head into the bar to order food before the 9.30 cut off for food orders. The food was some of the best I have had in any hotel. Mental note made – must go back there. (Colin already has!)

Overall the day was 8h42m in the saddle covering 93.7 miles. The moving average was a lowly 10.7mph. The maximum speed achieved was 39.3mph

Day 6 Kirkby Lonsdale to Warrington

You have no idea how difficult it was to leave the Whoop Hall that morning. Both of us would have been more than happy to put the tracker in the back of a minicab and pay the driver to drive to Lands End, not exceeding 25mph! The Sauna/Steam room the previous night was merely a fond memory as we set off towards Skipton on the A65 before turning right to cut across the somewhat undulating Yorkshire Dales.

We managed to find a local Post Office in a small village that has not been shut in the latest round of cost cutting by the Post Office. By sending some of my clothes plus the tools necessary to rebuild the bikes back I shed 1.6Kg from my trunk bag. Colin managed a mere 600g. The bike was noticeably lighter, but even so the constant climbing and descending was becoming more than a little wearing. Most of the hills were steep enough to warrant a little (or in many cases not so little) walk. After a few hours of this I could see Colin was at his limit physically and mentally. I also knew that this was one of the hardest days, and after this there were a relatively flat couple of days as we traversed the midlands and followed the Severn River to Bristol. Colin's normally relatively restrained language was becoming worse. Oh Bugger would appear regularly (or at least that is what I thought it was!)

The climb up to 1200ft just before Clitheroe really took its toll, and even the descent did little to refresh. The relatively gentle climb before Blackburn had Colin drop behind and as we left Blackburn mid afternoon we had only covered 50 miles. Colin had now hit the wall. I have once before (see my previous account) and knew this was serious. We stopped in a pub and called Mission Control. We were far short of our intended target for the night, and as it was now getting late the best I could expect to achieve was Warrington.

Colin took a taxi; I cycled the final 28 miles, half way there the heavens opened again. Under a tree I quickly donned the jacket and with gritted teeth cycled the reminder in a moderate downpour. The Taxi driver drove the whole way with the window open; never underestimate the smell of a sweaty cyclist!

Some 2h10m later we were reunited, and after the obligatory bath and cycling kit washing ritual, had long discussions over a very nice Italian meal.

Even with the last spurt the days figures were pretty poor, Up to the split the moving average was less than 10mph, although it was up to 11 at the end of the day.

Colin needed to take time out, and slow the pace down. I needed to make more use of my returning fitness. There were lots of options for Colin:

1. Give up.
2. Take time out and restart.
3. Start at Lands End and cycle back to where he stopped.

Once he had made the base decision we could then decide if I would be in or out of this in some way. Colin wanted to carry on (and I wanted him to, as frankly he had already probably worked harder than the whole trip from south to north). He could not however carry on at the current pace. Next was to decide if to have a day or rest or a low mileage day the following day. In the end Colin decided to set off with me in the morning and only go as far as Telford.

Day 7 Warrington to Hospital

I woke Colin at just gone 6am. He had been thinking about it all night and had decided to train it home. Having had the experience once, I could see that he was mentally and physically shot, and needed to take time out. We checked the station opposite and he could put his bike on the train there. We breakfasted together, said our goodbyes and I set off into the Warrington traffic, in the rush hour, in the rain – lovely! I was expecting to get home that night, being picked up at the end of the day somewhere around Evesham, and looking forward to a night in my own bed.

The climb out of Warrington is gentle, and the terrain over the next few days is relatively benign so I only had to contend with the wind and rain. The wind was light, less than 10mph, so hopefully with the rain due to be showers only; I would get a decent mileage in. As I approached Stretton just before the M56 there were about 10 cars queued for a red traffic light. I approached up the inside without slowing down too much. One of the cars was a little over to the left, and rather than stop I chose to go up to the pavement via a dropped kerb. As it was still raining and the road was wet, my front wheel, however, had a slightly different idea and decided not to. Oh Bugger! There was only one outcome from this, and, sure enough the laws of gravity took over and I hit the kerb – hard. I did, however, manage to fall underneath my bike to prevent it from being damaged! Initially I thought that although painful, I could work through it and cycle slowly for an hour or so until the pain subsided. My left buttock was swelling rapidly, and I was soon expecting perhaps some alien life form to burst out like in the movies. This was a pretty serious swelling.

I called International Rescue (Céleste) and Mission Control (Sue) to arrange recovery of myself and bike. I suggested calling the Air Ambulance for a lift home, but, on the basis I was some substantial distance away from deaths door they declined my kind offer of a trip to Warrington.

My JOGLE was therefore suspended after 562miles.

I used the bike as a walking frame to cross the road and went into the Pub opposite and asked for some help. They were fantastic, allowed me to sit almost comfortably, plied me with coffee and generally looked after me for the couple of hours until Céleste arrived. When I left they would not even let me pay for the coffee, yet another example of the lovely people you meet on the ride.

Getting Home

International Rescue arrived and duly took me home for some serious R&R. The attached photo was taken a couple of days later, and I suspect it will be several weeks before I can continue the epic trip. I WILL complete it, but need to get past the injuries first. Colin I am sure will do also, although I hope he does the Lands End to Blackburn. He has nothing to prove to anyone in my view, and has already achieved more than most. Had he used the same amount of energy in the opposite direction, it would certainly have spanned the whole distance from End to End.



Some Observations so far:

- There is a huge difference in road surfaces, in towns the road surface is at best poor, and often dangerous (Glasgow was the worst).
- Never underestimate the need for training
- Light lubrication of ones important parts with Vaseline or some recommend savlon or sudocream is most important
- When deciding what to take as luggage, take the lightest you can. Lay out on the bed or surface only what you NEED. Then throw half of it away, and then throw half of what is left away as well!
- Rain is wet, but wind is demoralising
- Don't even think about going north to south, go south to north!