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# Randonneur

## Marathon Cycling



### MADAME PREZ SAYS

*By Danelle Laidlaw*

Hey, hey – it’s 2006 and just look at our calendar of events – it is jammed! And we have some exciting new events – an “only for the courageous” 200 on the North Shore, a 400 in Penticton and VanIsle 1200 (a Ken Bonner inspiration), plus expanded schedules on the Island and Southern Interior (Kootenays – Gord Cooksville). It is great to have such a full calendar, particularly in a pre-PBP year.

A couple of reminders – we always need contributions for the newsletter. Tell us about your rides (training and otherwise), magazines you like to read, the latest in your equipment hope chest – I am sure you have something you would like to share with the club – send your articles to Scott Gater – [sgater@alumni.sfu.ca](mailto:sgater@alumni.sfu.ca)

Are you a member of the discussion group yet? Better join – that is where all the updates get posted these days. You don’t have to participate; you can just lurk. But don’t miss out on vital info that doesn’t make it to the newsletter.

Have you signed up for the Pacific Populaire? **Get on it.** Here is the link - <http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/pacpop/entry.html> I am currently negotiating the coffee deal and looking forward to a bright and sunny Sunday. The route will be essentially the same except we will be avoiding Cambie due to the construction for the RAV line. I am still confirming all my volunteers and

may need a few more. If you can help out – please contact me – 604 737-0043.

It might be time for some of you downtown Vancouver folks to start a regular training ride. I have had a bunch of requests for such a thing. Although Rando riding tends to be an individual thing, if you are getting out regularly to train, and are willing to have company, there are likely others out there who will happily join you. Besides, it might just keep you motivated....

A club like ours survives on volunteers. If you have some spare time and are able to help out at any of the events, your contribution will be most welcome. You will not miss out on your ride by volunteering. You can ride the organizer’s pre-ride and still get credit. And the club will cover any reasonable expenses you incur by volunteering. How else are you going to get that pretty orange pin?

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If you have any questions about the club, contact me, Danelle Laidlaw – [dplaid@telus.net](mailto:dplaid@telus.net), or 604 737-0043. I also sell the BC Rando clothing, important to look your best out there.

See you on the road. Cheers – Danelle

## Rando Clothing

Hey Dudes and Duettes - since it's time to start thinking about rando season again, it's time to stock up on some new clothing - we have everything - jackets, gloves, jerseys, shorts, and socks and lots of sizes. Call Danelle to make arrangements - 604 737-0043 or come see it at the spring social.

## 2005 Season Review

*by Eric Fergusson*

With the high level of enthusiasm and participation in most of the regularly scheduled brevets in the Lower Mainland, in the Interior, and on the Island this past season, many of you will be surprised to learn that the club's total distance figure was down in 2005 from the 2004 total. As is often the case in this sport we have to look to the four year ultra events cycle for the explanation - 2005 was a non-Paris Brest Paris and non-Rocky Mt. 1200 year. The 187,655 km club total is down 8,000 kms from 2004, but up 36,000 km from the last non-PBP/RM1200 year, 2001. One interesting

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The opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the article authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editor, club executive, Cycling BC, the CCA, or Randonneurs Mondiaux.

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Editor: Scott Gater

**Submissions:** Please send articles to the club's webmaster ([eric\\_fergusson@telus.net](mailto:eric_fergusson@telus.net)) or to the newsletter editor ([sgater@alumni.sfu.ca](mailto:sgater@alumni.sfu.ca)). Preference is for plain text files or Word and digital photos in JPEG format. Or mail (preferable a diskette) to Scott Gater #108-7411 Minoru Blvd, Richmond BC V6Y 1Z3

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club stat that may not be unrelated to this, is that more 1000 km brevets (21) were completed in BC in 2005 than ever before. Maybe with no big-deal 1200s to temp us, we saw 1000s as the next best thing. (Curiously, there were also a near record number of 300 km brevets in 2005... no explanation jumps to mind.)

If you were willing to travel a little, there was a generous menu of international ultra brevets to choose from in 2005, and there were BC Randonneurs at most of them. London Edinburgh London, held every four years, saw four BC riders on course in 2005: Dave Kirsop, Keith and Ross Nichol, and Wim Kok. Another event held only every fourth year is the Davis Bike Club's Gold Rush Randonnée in northern California. Congratulations to Keith Fraser who repeated as first finisher (he was first finisher in 2001), an honour Keith shared this time with 3 other riders in a course record time of 58:26. The next rider in was Ken Bonner in 63:36. I'm sure everyone has already heard that Ken rode all four 1200 km brevets in the US in 2005. A few other BC Randonneurs joined him at a few of them. Ken was the only BC Randonneur at Boston Montreal Boston, but was joined by Ron Himschoot at Colorado Last Chance, and by 2004's super rookie Scott Gater at the inaugural Cascade 1200 hosted by SIR in Washington State.

39 riders earned Super Randonneur medals in 2005 for doing a full series - 200, 300, 400, 600 km brevets – and, as always, there were some new faces on the list.

Congratulations to the 8 first-time Super Randonneurs: Melissa Friesen, Bob Koen, Paul Kusch, Brad Maguire, Pat Martel, Laura Penner, Ron Penner and Jeff Schlingloff. Take special note of that last name. Jeff's 5500 km event distance total placed him second on the 2005 Hathaway (iron-butt) list, and is the most distance ever by a first-time SR, edging out Dan Wood's 1993 total of 5400 km. And it wasn't just about the distance with Jeff – he also registered some of the year's fastest times... strong cyclist, fabulous climber. Watch out for the elevation-infused north-shore 200 km, which he is organizing for June 24, 2006.

Special mention also to Melissa Friesen, who endured my mild provocations a year ago for almost, but not quite, reaching Super Randonneur status in a year when no women were on the rookie SR list. You will notice that this year there are two women on the rookie list. Congratulations to Melissa and also to Laura Penner.

Special congratulations to Doug Latornell and Ross Nichol for earning their Brevet Randonneur 5000 awards. The club can now boast 18 who have received this prized distance cycling distinction since PBP 2003

The Lower Mainland brevets were noteworthy for a couple of reasons in 2005. For starters the spring rides – there are eight - from the March 19 social through the June 1000, received some of the most serious rain we've seen for years. Only the spring 300 had minimal rains. The Pacific Populaire and the April 16 200 km were particularly miserable.

The other thing striking on the Mainland was the number of new routes and new roads. Deirdre and Bob found some fresh ways through Whatcom county on the spring 300; Doug, Susan and Sharon actually found some new destinations within the Fraser Valley watershed on the spring 400 "tour des lacs" (though lacs were a bit scarce); John and Danelle took us up spectacular Mt. Baker for the first time since season one (1979) on the summer 400; Stephen found an abundance of new roads between familiar controls on the summer 600; and Barry Chase had a new highway built between Squamish and Whistler for the summer 300. Thanks Barry!

A surprise hit this year was Roger and Ali's Canada Day Populaire. Popular also was the Half Moon summer 100/200 on the beautiful Sunshine Coast. For the first time, roads were found to flesh out a full 200 km brevet route, in addition to a 100 km route which drew impressive local ridership.

The Vancouver Island brevet series was noteworthy in 2005 for one reason in particular. It was Stephen Hinde's final year as Vancouver Island ride coordinator, a position he's held since 1987. Stephen has nurtured and grown interest in randonneur cycling on the Island, designed many beautiful (if challenging) routes, and has made Island brevets a favorite destination for riders on the lower mainland and elsewhere. Thanks, Stephen and Carol, for your many efforts.

As always we were happy to see participation from our amigos from Washington State. There were riders up for the Flèche Pacifique of course (and they

keep winning the trophies), but also many were on hand for the mainland spring 300. Brian List, Peter McKay and Amy Piper joined us for the Peace Arch – Saint Helen's summer 1000, a route which spent 200 meters in BC and the rest of the time on roads running through their own back yards.

What is there left to say about Ken Bonner – hero, legend, sensation, etc., etc... In 2005 Ken found yet another way to amaze us, and the rest of the ultra cycling world. His new thing this season was to ride "over 100 centuries" (100 *miles* each), and to complete all four US 1200 km brevets. He achieved both of these goals, but that's only the beginning of this story. Although he was 63 during the 2005 season, age still doesn't seem to be affecting his speed: he was the first finisher at the Cascade 1200 in 74:21; GRR 63:36 (5<sup>th</sup> finisher); BMB 59:38 (5<sup>th</sup> finisher); and at CLC he was again the first finisher in a remarkable 54:46, smashing his own course record from 2002 by over five hours. (Notice how the times kept getting faster over the season.) What is commonly being said now about Ken is that he is one of the rare riders to be able to ride 1200 km brevets in fewer hours than his age. ("It gets easier as you get older, Eric" was Ken's remark.) But fast as he is, Ken never seems like he's in a rush - he always seems to have time to chat with other riders, and hear their road stories. What a guy. As for those centuries, he ended up riding 125 of them – that's more than one every third day, and it was enough to place him distantly atop the Ultra Marathon Cycling Association's year-rounder list. He also managed to ride enough local brevets in addition to his four US 1200s to easily win the Hathaway ("iron butt") award for the fourth straight year (total = 10,171 km). To cap the year off Ken became the first BC rider to reach 100,000 km in life-time randonneur event distance. His "all-in" total for 2005 is an astonishing 31,161 km. Many of you will know that he also runs marathons in his spare time – he ran 4 more this year bringing his life-time count up to 156. (He was 1st of 15 (3:35:29) in 60-64 age group

## Coming Events

### *Roger Street Memorial Ride*

February 26-9am at Bean Brothers in Kerrisdale- 41<sup>st</sup> Ave  
Susan Allen 604-734-2504

### *Seattle 200-March 11*

-location TBA  
Contact Seattle Int Randonneurs for details

### *BC Rando Spring Social-March 18*

Moose's Down Under  
Michel Richard 604-739-6798

### *Seattle 300-March 25*

Bainbridge Island  
Rick Blacker 250-746-5236

### *NaniamoPopulaire-March 26*

Southgate Tim Hortons  
Don Munro 250-746-5236

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Don Munro 250-746-5236

### *Pacific Populaire – Apr 2*

9 am: Riley Park  
Danelle Laidlaw

### *Chemanius 200- April 8*

7am Chemanius  
Doug Latronell 604-734-2504

### *Peace District –April 8*

25, 50 km  
Wim Kok 250-785-4589

### *Lower Mainland 200-April 15*

Start – TBA- 7am  
Manfred  
Kuchenmuller

### *Peace District – April 15*

50, 100 km  
Wim Kok 250-785-4589

### *Interior 200- April 22*

Kamloops  
Richard Blair 250-372-1873

### *Island 300- April 22*

Victoria/Duncan/Sooke  
Don Munro 250-746-5236

### *Peace District-April 22*

100, 150  
Wim Kok 250-785-4589

at the Yakima River Canyon Marathon; and 4<sup>th</sup> of 70 (3:40:59) at Vancouver.) And to all this you can add one more distinction... Ken was selected as BC Randonneur's poet laureate – chosen at random from five worthy candidates, but eligible because of his brilliant one word entry “b’IKE!” Ken Bonner... very long cycling distances, very short poetry at our Annual General Meeting/banquet in October.

I'd like to mention a few other club members who did unusual or noteworthy things this past season that aren't accounted for in their annual brevet totals. In his 78<sup>th</sup> season (of life) Harold Bridge rode Land's End – John O'Groats (Britain end to end). This follows his Canada end to end from a year earlier. Data base manager extraordinaire, Cheryl Lynch, was off doing triathlons again this year, and had an exceptional result – she finished third (Bronze Medal !) in her age category at the long course triathlon world championships in Denmark in August. Congratulations Cheryl. We're still waiting for the 2005 totals to be calculated for the Canadian Kilometre Achievement Program's (C-KAP's) awards, but 2004 saw both the individual male (Henry Berkenbos - 28,646 km) trophy, and the team (13 riders - 158,474 km) trophy in the hands of BC Randonneurs. 2005 looks similarly promising. Wim Kok made a valuable contribution to club this year that didn't involve him getting on his bike all. Wim scoured archives looking for newspaper/press coverage on randonneur cycling in western Canada over the past 35 years, and came up with an impressive selection. This collection of articles is now posted on the web site in the “odds and ends” section (oddly located, I know – one day I'll get around to that club history section). And finally I have to say a word about myself. I was thrilled to be awarded the Roger Street Award in 2005 for “outstanding contribution to the club”, and I feel doubly honored to be recognized with an award with the big guy's name on it. Many many thanks for this wonderful distinction.

So with another season behind us, we offer warm thanks to our out-going President Lyle Beaulac for pacing us around this cool track, and thanks also to the many enthusiastic organizers and volunteers whose efforts miraculously make this thing work year after year. Bonne chance to our incoming infinitely-talented president Danelle Laidlaw who is the first repeat club president we've had (she was first pres in 2001).

As for 2006, there's plenty to look forward to. Nowhere is this more true than on the Island. An expanded VI schedule will be overseen by Raymond Parker who has the daunting task of taking over as VI ride coordinator from Stephen Hinde. And here's your highlight - in early July all eyes

will be on Victoria, and points up-island, for the inaugural “VanIsle 1200” being organized by, guess who, Ken Bonner. Can't wait!

*We had several riders go to the UK in 2005- Wim Kok, Ross and Keith Nichols, and Dave Kirsop went to ride London Edinburgh London. Harold Bridge went with a group to ride End to End- Lands end to John O'Groats. Their stories should help to inspire us all.*

## **London-Edinburgh-London 2005**

*by E.W. (Wim ) Kok, Peace Region Brevet Organizer*

### **Introduction**

*"The Year. 2005. 300 Cyclists. From five Continents. Rise to the Challenge. 885 Miles, Less than 5 Days. London to Edinburgh. Then back again. On a bicycle. Yes, Really! We know it's crazy. But we're doing it anyway. Everything is booked. We can't get out of it." So reads the text accompanying Damon Peacock's introductory movie clip on London-Edinburgh-London. By the way, starring in the clip is BC Randonneur David Kirsop, rider # 69. (<http://www.audax.uk.net/el/index.htm>)*

Organized for the first time in 1989 and held once very four years London-Edinburgh-London (LEL) is one of those ultra-cycling events, which shows up on many a randonneur's wish list. I was intrigued by this 1,400 km event, which starts in Lee Valley/Cheshunt, just north of London for an out-and-back bike ride to Edinburgh, Scotland. It has to be completed in 116 hours and 40 minutes (or less), a time based on an average speed of 12 kph. This includes every second of down time. This spring I started thinking about doing another 1200 km ride, but wasn't sure yet which one. After contemplating GRR, Cascades 1200 and BMB, I finally settled on LEL. My goals were to (1) finish the ride in about 100 hrs, and (2) enjoy the British landscape, which meant riding as much as possible by daylight. Spring training included populaires (50, 100 and 150 km) and many short rides in between, followed by the 200 km and 300 km brevets. At the end of May I did the Vancouver Island 600 km followed by the Toronto 400 km a week later. In mid June I completed another 600 km, which brought my training close to the recommended plan for LEL. After that I reduced the volume, so that I would be fresh for the start. To get a sense of the route, I studied the detailed route instructions. There were 523 (!) directions over 1,417 km, which works out to one for every 2.7 km. It was obvious that the navigation skills had to be sharp to stay on the course.

## Travelling to Britain

Left Canada on July 11 to first visit my family in the Netherlands. Did a bit of cycling, not much. Thursday July 21 I took the train from Deventer to Hoek van Holland, to catch a fast ferry - up to 70 kph -- to Harwich. There I connected with the train to London's Liverpool Street Station. Stena Lines had a steal of deal. For C\$ 70.00 one could travel from anywhere in the Netherlands to London, not bad for three hours by train and another four by fast ferry across the North Sea. Beats the Eurostar price through the Chunnel. Yes, the catamaran ferry did work well! During the sailing we learnt that a series of bomb attacks in London had failed that same afternoon; the city was on high alert again. While disembarking in Harwich and boarding Rail One to London, there were no signs of alert. At London Liverpool station officials were very relaxed and above all very helpful to get me on the commuter train to Cheshunt. The Lee Valley Youth Hostel/LEL start was within 200 meters, so the trek with suit- and *Ironcase* was not too onerous.

Friday morning I assembled the bike and went to the on-site mobile bike shop to have two new chain rings installed. The old ones had gotten '*short in the teeth.*' The rings were installed free of charge, courtesy of one of the LEL sponsors. Wonderful! While chatting, the bike mechanic mentioned that he was contracted by a London company on a permanent basis to maintain its employees' bicycles. Upon my suggestion that this must be a progressive company taking its employees' health to heart, he commented that it was pure financial interest. By maintaining an employee's bike the company would save one thousand pounds *annually* per employee by not having to provide a car parking lot. High land cost and property taxes were the deciding factors. Hey, another plug for the bike. Did a quick spin on the bike to test its readiness. My yellow-green machine was ready. Met up with Keith and Ross, including the third brother of the Nichol's trio. Also ran into and briefly chatted with the almost legendary Jack Eason, who with BC Randonneurs Harold Bridge and Dave Gillanders are exemplary in showing us younger crowd what's possible beyond age 40.

Later on walked to downtown Cheshunt to exchange Euros and cents for Pounds and pennies. Had lunch with Tony Lonera from Italy and discussed LEL strategy, if there is such a thing as strategy. Ha, as if only our minds are in control. Registered that afternoon, filled my drop bag for the Hovingham control (*Km 381*) and packed my panniers more than once. Nervous ritual, stage fright? Still haven't quite learnt it after all these years. The evening pasta dinner was a relaxed event; soon everyone settled in for a quiet night.

## Day 1: Saturday July 23: Cheshunt - Hovingham (381 km)

1. Lee Valley (Km 00) 65 km
2. Gamlingay (Km 65) 87 km
3. Thurlby (Km 152) 71 km
4. Lincoln (Km 223) 75 km
5. Thorne (Km 298) 83 km
6. Hovingham (Km 381)

Most riders rose bright and early, enjoyed a good breakfast. Almost 200 riders started at Control #1: **Cheshunt** (Km 0) in blocks of 50 under cloudy skies. Rocco Richardson and Simon Doughty reminded us of two key things: (1) ride safely; take no risks; and (2) enjoy yourself! And with that we were off into the British countryside. Riding on the left side of the road somewhat tentative at first, but gradually growing more confident in tackling the many O's and mini O's (traffic circles); some 60 of them! Entering them against the grain - for non-British that is - was one thing, exiting quite another. It required fast unlearning an almost instinctive behaviour. We succeeded. The route took us through urban Cheshunt and its outskirts. The roads started to roll and wind, or to pitch and roll in sailor's jargon. Often that same road would be skirted by hedges and covered with tree canopies, creating beautiful verdant tunnels. The pace was steady, nothing like the mad dash and rush, so characteristic of the PBP start. The detailed route sheet may have contributed to this. Men and women hardened and wisened by experience, they were no fools. They knew the task at 'leg' - 1,400 km is a longer distance - and almost stoically we rode a manageable pace, at least in our group. There was ample opportunity to meet and greet fellow riders, make and renew friendships. Share and relive experiences from previous rides. Gradually we got used to the route sheets (eight pages in all; two columns per page). Using an odometer was no luxury for this event. In fact, it greatly eased the navigation, except in a few instances, where the paper route disagreed with reality.

Some two and half hours later we arrived at Control #2: **Gamlingay** (*Km 65*), where volunteers greeted us with smiles, food and other goodies. Within half an hour we were on the road again, gradually leaving the hills behind us toward Control # 3: **Thurlby** (*Km 152*). The walls inside the control were decorated with drawings and flags of participating countries. These were made by the primary school kids. A neat touch of community spirit. After food and cups of Yorkshire tea we tackled the next leg, most likely the least attractive landscape of the entire brevet. It was mainly flat and open; not much tree cover. The grain fields of the coastal plain were dissected with quite a few drainage channels. There were many gigantic cooling towers, power plants and transmission lines. Ugly! For a

while it felt as if we were riding in circles. We did not. Finally we made it to the youth hostel at Control # 4: **Lincoln** (Km 223) with more food and refreshments - what's new - and onward to the next control. The ride through these sections revealed a lot about the nature of the British cultural landscape. Reading the place names revealed a distinct Norse influence in place names ending with *-by* such as Harby, Ingoldsby, Newby, Saundby, Slingsby, Thurlby, and Whisby, or *-thorpe* as in Caythorpe, Elsthorpe, Manthorpe; and *-toft*, as in Toft, and Sandtoft; and a Roman influence in place names ending with *-caster* as in Ancaster and Doncaster. 'Typical British' then represents a mosaic of other cultures solidly welded in a landscape of geographic names.

Lincoln is a pretty sizable city with an impressive cathedral. It took a bit of city riding with all the traffic, before we were out of town. The route sheet caused a minor problem, but we were able to cycle our way out of the confusion. Not long after having solved that one, another obstacle: a work crew had blocked a level railway crossing. They couldn't tell us when it would re-open. After waiting a bit, we asked if we could use a narrow passage to cross the tracks; they agreed. We crossed, waited and regrouped. Then the pace picked up substantially. A tiny Welshman dragged us along in the fading evening light. Could he ever spin! Meanwhile the Italian contingent began singing Italian songs to cheer up one of their teammates, who apparently hit a low. While it wasn't vintage Pavarotti, it did the trick. This was the spirit. Camaraderie at its best. Indeed "*Memories are made of this*," to quote from one of Dean Martin's songs.

As we got closer to Control # 5: **Thorne** (Km 298), we had to stop and ask a few times for route clarification. It was dark by the time we made it to the rugby club, where a few late night patrons were still sipping their brew. How inviting to join, but the plan called for another 84 clicks. Some riders called it a day at Thorne, and planned to continue at dawn. Not a bad idea. After restocking the body we left and cycled over a flat stretch that did not leave any impressions, other than it was dark and we were fast. Around Sand Hutton (Km 358) the terrain became more undulating and road more winding. One of the Belgian riders, whose bike was equipped with abundant lights and very detailed route maps, set a gruelling pace. Since route finding in the dark was a bit of a challenge, we decided to hang on. We were flying over those narrow country lanes; somewhere took a wrong turn, but recovered the route to Barton le Willows (*'le'* stands for lea meaning meadow). After crossing the **A64** we cycled over an increasingly steep road to Slingsby; a giant roller coaster it was. Passed a huge monument, then entered the gate of Castle Howard. A bit further, suddenly there it was in the centre of a roundabout

on the tree-lined alley, a beautifully lit obelisk. A stunning sight. Wow. Photo-opportunity for the digital camera-bugs. Missed seeing the actual Castle Howard, but that was a treat for the return trip. After another 8 km we pulled into Control # 6: **Hovingham** (Km 381). Too tired to eat, I first took a shower, then stuffed some food in a rather reluctant body, and 'settled' in for a short, uncomfortable rest - the place was packed -- of no more than 3 hours.

## Day 2: Sunday July 24: Hovingham - Dalkeith/Edinburgh(326 km)

6. Hovingham (Km 381) 80 km
7. Eppleby (Km 461) 42 km
- 7a. Langdon Beck (Km 503) 27 km
8. Alston (Km 530) 58 km
9. Cannonbie (Km 588) 53 km
- 9a. Boston Hall (Km 641) 66 km
10. Dalkeith (Km 707)

'Woke- up' a little after 5:00 am. Many riders had already left, so the hall was less crowded. Breakfast went down a lot better than the food upon arrival. The morning was stunningly beautiful, very serene and peaceful. It felt great to get on the road again through this pastoral landscape with lots of sheep. First we tackled some pretty steep rollers, much steeper than expected. There were heaps in the berm; these had us guessing as to their origin, cause and purpose. No, they weren't road markers, anthills or disintegrating sandstone rocks. What could they be? So after a bit of scientific and non-scientific deduction, I figured/speculated/concluded that they must have been heaps of sand mixed with road salt to help motorist in the winter safely tackle the slippery slopes. We could have asked, I guess. The climb through Coxwold was challenging, but scenically rather rewarding. Soon we were in more open country on our way to Control # 7: **Eppleby** (Km 461). At that point we had covered about one third of the distance. We did not stay very long, then moved on toward the Pennine Chain, Britain's geological spine.

This leg was quite pretty; we crossed the Tees River a few times and noted an increasing amount of road kill. The further North we went, the worse it got. The road was littered with dead rabbits, crows, magpies, hawks, rats, partridges, all kinds of rodents as well as hedgehogs, all unsuspecting victims of encounters with travelers of the other kind. We avoided the spiny leftovers of hedgehogs, because no one was interested in multiple punctures. Many of the rabbits were totally flattened and dried-up, leaving no more than a thin sheet of 'bunny paper' on the asphalt. In our (my) sillier moments, I suggested they'd make fine souvenirs: 'From Scotland with Love.' Plain silliness of

course, but that sometimes happens on long rides.

The road kill however did remind me of an interview broadcast many years ago on CBC radio '*As It Happens*', with a peculiar Brit and his extraordinary habit. The latter made him peculiar. I can't recall whether he traveled by car or motorcycle, but his habit was to scoop-up road kill, clean it, wrap in foil and place it on the manifold. He then kept on driving until it was done. The well-done, rare, medium or scorched morsels then became the carnivorous component of his supper. He recounted many tasteful, and less appetizing details of the raw status of the road kill as he picked it up - I'll spare the details. Pheasant was the only kill he wouldn't put on the manifold. This bounty he'd take home, string it up and let it cure until the head fell off. Only then would it be ready for the pot -- after further necessary culinary treatment of course - and eating. So the story went. While there was ample road kill between London and Edinburgh (and back) to feed all of us, none of us made use of it. No manifold on the bike!

We passed the beautiful Barnhard Castle and gradually climbed our way up the spine toward Control # 7a: **Langdon Beck** (*Km 503*). Here they served yummy potato-and-leek soup, good coffee, sandwiches and fruit. Langdon Beck isn't much more than the youth hostel, a few distant and dispersed farms; a pub and a church, at least judging by the name St. John's Chapel. The countryside looked like one gigantic alpine meadow. Windswept grasslands with miles and miles of stone fences. It felt empty, remote and austere, yet the scattered farms in the valleys below, somewhat protected from the elements, and the sheep on the hillsides provided ample evidence to the contrary. There were stunning views, although somewhat subdued by the overcast skies that day. Wondered what a bright sunny day would do to this open space. Departing from Langdon Beck we headed for the summit at Yad Moss over a persistent 11 km climb, then descended over the next 15 km to Alston. There was a brutal 16% drop in the last 400 meters over a cobblestone road surface, including a 90-degree left turn as conclusion.

We stopped briefly at optional Control # 8: **Alston** (*Km 530*), another youth hostel and then continued. Turned right at the war memorial and went up the hill on a section, which for a change required little route sheet reading for the next 28.8 km! Time to take the eyes of the odometer and enjoy the pretty scenery and rolling landscape. The winds had died, the cloudy skies opened and sunshine 'broke out'; temperatures rose. After Brampton the choice between a 'hilly route over back country lanes' or the 'heavily trafficked A6071/Longtown/A7 to Cannonbie' one. We opted for the latter, which on account of Sunday turned out to be a rather quiet route. Outside Longtown the winds

picked up, to bother us until Control # 9: **Cannonbie** (*Km 588*). That control provided good food and offered a service with a personal touch. For a pound we'd buy a Cannonbie postcard and the control crew would mail it.

Since the leg from Cannonbie to Dalkeith was 119 km, LEL organizers had set up an extra control after 53 km at Boston Hall near Etrick. This would then leave another 66 km to the turnaround at Dalkeith. We left the Cannonbie control as a loose group (Glen Werner, Edmund Hinz, Jens Kussler and others), crossed the Esk River, panted up a steep hill, then turned left onto a nameless country lane. A bit of anxiety here: a 'no name' country lane? Would we indeed ride off the map, never to be seen or heard from again? We went through Claygate, then indeed disappeared for awhile, rode narrow lanes, cycled up and down a few wicked hills, crossed a small river, and passed through a marvellous forest - would not have wanted to miss this gorgeous section. Near Langholm we reappeared and connected with the main road to that community. Here we noted the Lockerbie road sign, pointing to the place where tragedy struck December 21, 1988, when PanAm flight 103 was blown up in mid-air. It killed 259 passengers and crew, and 11 residents of Lockerbie, eternally scarring an innocent community and humanity.

( [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan\\_Am\\_Flight\\_103](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pan_Am_Flight_103) ). Upon seeing the Lockerbie sign, the disaster wasn't quite so abstract anymore. I couldn't help but think that LEL should have gone through Lockerbie, to provide us with that glimpse of history - and a reminder that 'it ain't all pretty'. Lest we forget.

After crossing the Esk in Langholm, we literally headed for the hills of the Scottish Borderlands. A sense of remoteness and loneliness rested in the landscape. We skirted the valley; steep hills on either side. It was not long after that our group fell to bits. We met quite a few of the Thorne starters returning from Dalkeith. Somewhere I heard a voice call '*Hey Wim*', to my pleasant surprise it was none other than Dave Kirsop. Needless to say that we stopped for a few minutes to compare notes. Dave had recognized my yellow green machine with blue panniers. Soon we resumed our ride in opposite direction. Dave South, Wim North. Flanked on either side by steep hills, the route through the Esk valley was very scenic. The climbs became longer and more arduous, as a result the ride became an individual struggle. Glen was behind, Jens and Edmund and others were ahead. At that point I cycled alone, both body and mind complaining: "you're tired; it's still so far, you're lacking sleep." I brushed these mental deviants aside and plodded on. One trick that helped me stay focused was comparing the remaining distance (to the control) with my 30 km early morning training circuit. That helped put

distance and time in perspective. An LEL patrol car stopped to check on us. I understood the distance to the next control to be less than it turned out. The route sheet read '*Left in Ettrick, imm. after river bridge*', there were however many small bridges and roads to the left, but none of them pointed to a control. Uncertainty about the distance made this section a bit of a grind. Finally, after the umpteenth bridge - no sign of Ettrick - but there was one to the LEL Control # 9a: **Boston Hall** (Km 641). Hurrah. I had expected to be far behind the riders with whom we had left Cannonbie, only to find out that they arrived just ten minutes earlier.

The stop here was brief, because we wanted to capture as much daylight as possible. The coffee, soup and other goodies did miracles. After we resumed, our speed increased substantially. We turned on to a narrow lane with several 'sheep guards' (cattleguards for sheep), which had to be crossed carefully. We conquered quite a few long climbs. It must have been past 11:00 pm, when we arrived at Innerleithen, still another 50 km to the turnaround. We had to clarify the route directions with local residents. They warned us about sheep on the road ahead. I couldn't help but remark that if we'd collide, it would be a soft and woolly landing, later on realizing that most sheep had been shorn - thus no soft landing!! For a moment I also wondered why in the land of plenty there was no mutton and red wine on the menu at the controls. Then again, come to think of it, we could have easily dropped in at a restaurant for such a gourmet dinner. Never thought of doing this. We were too occupied. Ah well, next time.

After some 30 km in the Moorfoot Hills we came to a snow-gate. The route sheet read to go through, but the sign blocking the road indicated construction ahead and pointed to a detour. Lacking local knowledge about the state of the road and the nature of construction - who wants to possibly cycle 10+ km of gravel in the dark? So we decided to follow the official detour through Heriot. The detour added an extra 10 km to the 1,417 km brevet. Less than 1%, so what? We rapidly descended the dark and winding road; caution was the word and deed. We finally made it to the A7, which led us through Edinburgh's suburbs to Control # 10: **Dalkeith** (Km 707). Arrived at about 1:30 am Monday morning. Time for a shower, a meal and a sleep. The hot shower was great, so was the meal; what counted for 'sleep' left lots to be desired. The post had run out of cots and blankets, so the solution: find a spot and fend for yourself. It was not very warm. I found a spot, used a tiny towel as blanket. That did not work, so I put my Goretex jacket on, closed up every vent and zipper to keep the heat in, only to discover that this material has absolutely no R-value. I shivered and teeth-chattered myself through the rest of the night. Was I ever glad to get up for a hot breakfast.

### Day 3: Monday July 25: Dalkeith- Eppleby (247 km)

- 10. Dalkeith (Km 707) 66 km
- 10a. Ettrick (Km 773) 53 km
- 11. Cannonbie (Km 826) 60 km
- 12. Alston (Km 886) 26 km
- 12a. Langdon Beck (Km 912) 42 km
- 13. Eppleby (Km 954)

By 6:00 am Jens, Edmund and I were on the road. Cycling warmed us quickly. We now saw the road and countryside by daylight. It looked so much better and ride went faster. No concern about the next corner; how sharp it might be; would there be potholes and/or gravel? We could see it all. And, it was well worth it. This part of the return leg also seemed to have more downhill than up; nice bonus. The hills were really neat. They were covered with heather, which had just started to bloom. Couldn't help stopping to pick a few twigs as a souvenir. When I showed it to one of the residents at Boston Hall, she mentioned that they use it to decorate churches and halls for special occasions. Passing through Innerleithen, we did a zig-zag -- first right, then left -- and continued south. Passed the Buddhist temple, quite an 'out-of-place' feature in the Scottish landscape. During the 1999 edition of LEL, this temple did double duty as one of the official controls.

Outside his house, just before Control 10a: **Boston Hall/Ettrick** (Km 773), a bagpiper stood playing some Scottish (or personal) lament. I remarked to a fellow rider that the chap either played for us, or that his wife had kicked him out, to which he responded 'probably the latter'. Recounting this to a kilted Scotsman at the control, he dryly repeated 'probably the latter'. So there is a general agreement that in order to practice their craft bagpipers are kicked out of the house. One Scottish comedian on 'Just for Laughs' called what comes out of the bagpipe 'the missing link between a noise and a sound.' Quite a bit of self-deprecation. The stop at Ettrick again was brief and much appreciated. The remainder of the route south was straight forward - if you don't count the numerous curves, that is -- mainly downhill and very pretty. In Langholm we crossed the Esk again, disappeared for awhile into the sticks with steep snappy hills, then sailed across the Esk into Control # 11: **Cannonbie** (Km 826). We spent close to an hour here and chatted with Edmund and Jens about the next section. On the way up they had taken the 'scenic, but very hilly section' to Cannonbie, which in their words had caused '*ein grosses und tiefes Trauma*'. They may well have ended on a shrink's couch, had it not been for the opportunity to get it off their minds. Luckily for them we took the flat but, busier section this time, which must have shrunk '*das Trauma*' even more. Randonneuring can be such a purifying



experience.

The next 60 km went via Brampton, Midgeholm, Slaggyford, Knarsdale in the Tyne valley to Alston, places which by the way look much bigger on the map than in reality. We picked **Alston** (*Km 886*) as Control # 12, so that Langdon Beck (*Km 912*) km) with its leek-and- potato soup became optional. Since I had picked Alston as optional on the way up, I ended with a stamp for every LEL control. The first 400 meter out of Alston was a real muscle burner. It includes a 16% grade and as insult to injury the cobblestones (Dutch: '*kinder-koppen*'; Flemish: '*kasseien*'). Grunted up this hill in my granny gear. The grade then eased off, but overall the road kept on climbing to the Pennine summit at Yad Moss. The weather remained cool and windy. Despite the climbing effort, I kept my windbreaker on; no luxury! At Yad Moss we began our descent, which did not require any effort: gravity took care of us. Since Alston was only 26 km behind us, we passed the optional control at Langdon Beck and just kept on sailing down through Middleton in Teesdale (very pretty), Mickleton, Romaldekirk, Cotherstone, and Lartington, across the Tees in Startforth. Here we went steeply down into the valley, negotiated a 180 degree hairpin, followed by a 90 degree left hook across the wooden bridge over the Tees.

With only 10 km to go to Eppleby we must have misread the route sheet. Somehow, it did not make sense anymore: so close, yet so far. Sigh!! We waved down a farm service truck and explained our dilemma: our quest, destination and required route. The mechanic, who was intimately familiar with every lane and trail, got us back on track in no time. Another sigh, this time one of relief. One shouldn't be too shy to tap local knowledge. He drew a sketch map of our route. This made more sense than trying to absorb verbal directions like: go left, then right after the third corner..... Well, you know how that usually goes. During such explanation, (1) you nod in agreement; meanwhile (2) question marks rise in and above your head; (3) you are too polite to ask again for fear of sounding dim; then (4) you mumble 'I get it' and 'thanks' and depart, while (5) hoping for the best; and within minutes (6) you realize that you can't remember the details anymore. Oh, drat!! Now (7) you're stuck in the proverbial brown paper bag. Anyway, with the route sheet and the sketch map we made it to Control # 13: **Eppleby** (*Km 954*) by 9:00 pm.

The original plan was to make to Hovingham (*Km 1,034*), where I wanted to be reunited with my drop bag. However I remembered that the Eppleby-Hovingham leg had 40 km of rather hilly terrain. After two days of challenging hills in the Scottish Borderlands, riding those lumps in the dark had lost some of its appeal. And, it also meant arriving very late in (if not early in the morning) in

Hovingham. To stick to the original plan did not make sense anymore. I would be figuratively and literally losing sight of my objective to ride as much of LEL in daylight. Stopping in Eppleby would get me back on track. The other advantage would be an earlier and longer sleep, which did not seem a luxury at all. To continue or not to continue, that was the question. With more than enough time in hand, an executive decision was made to do the extra 80 km on Day 4. Called it a day, went for a brief walk in town and popped in at one - probably the only one - of the local pubs for one pint of Guinness. In the afternoon I had been wishing for a cool beer. I even 'saw people walking on the road all dressed up going out for a gourmet dinner'. Of course, there were none. Upon closer inspection these 'imagined people' were no more than traffic signs along the road.

Meanwhile in the pub, I chatted with the only patron and the host about the meaning of all those bike(r)s in town, learnt about local concerns: crime, drugs and not enough police; in short crime and punishment. On the walk back to the control, one of the villagers stopped me and also asked about those cyclists; yet another opportunity to extol the virtues of randonneuring and LEL. By 10 pm I was horizontal in the very quiet of the control.

#### **Day 4: Tuesday July 26: Eppleby - Thurlby (311 km)**

13. Eppleby (Km 954) 80 km
14. Hovingham (Km 1034) 82 km
15. Thorne (Km 1118) 77 km
16. Lincoln (Km 1195) 70 km
17. Thurlby (Km 1265)

Around 4 am the near dead became restless and rose for a leisurely breakfast. An hour later a small group(Australian, Belgian, Gerard Hazebroek, a few others and myself) started out at a good pace. At Scorton we cycled around the village green, crossed a big highway somewhere and entered Coxwold, did the long descent and then the beautiful roller-coaster to arrive at Control # 14:

**Hovingham** (*Km 1034*) in 3.5 hours. Some who had continued the night before had taken some 5.5 hours to cover the same distance. Riding in the dark at the end of a long day definitely slows one down. In Hovingham I had another great shower, switched clothes from the drop bag and enjoyed my breakfast. Felt like a new man ready to tackle the remainder. An hour later we were on the road to Slingsby, past the beautiful Castle Howard, the obelisk and through the gate in the castle wall. Then down a steep, winding road with hedges on either side. This section was dangerous, since cars came scooting up the hill. Once across the **A64** the rollers disappeared and the landscape flattened. Indeed it was flat until we got to Control #15: **Thorne** (*Km 1118*). The rugby club was pretty quiet at this

time. We took our time to recover and then cycled to Control # 16: **Lincoln** (*Km 1195*), for a late afternoon arrival. We had completed the almost 1,200 km of LEL in about 80 hours. A break and another 70 km to go. This went pretty well, until a few clicks before the control we missed a turn (again). With some local advice, we were able to navigate ourselves in the dark to Control 17: **Thurlby** (*Km 1265*). It was 10 pm and the control quite crowded. Most riders decided to take a meal break. For a financial donation to the Red Cross, this control even offered a brew-transfusion. Marvelous idea. A few of us wondered whether to continue to London for another 152 km. Since we had covered 311 km that day, fumbled in the dark just before the Thurlby control and lost time doing so, we decided to put our heads down until daybreak.

**Day 5: Wednesday July 273: Thurlby - Cheshunt (152 km)**

- 17. Thurlby (Km 1265) 87 km
  - 18. Gamlingay (Km 1352) 66 km
  - 19. Finish Cheshun/Lee Valley(Km 1417 )
- Arrival @ 13:55 pm. Total 101:25 (hrs:min)

Got up around 5:00 am, enjoyed another leisurely breakfast; and by 6:00 am Gerard and I were on the road. The red sky at the horizon was impressive, although the overhead cloud cover threatened rain. Sure enough, a few hours into the ride a cold drizzle and light rain started. "Red sky in the morning, cyclist's warning" is the new maxim, a variant of the old sailor's one. On this stretch I was thinking about the finish. While chatting about it with Gerard, my thoughts went back to the RM 1200 finish line in Kamloops 2002. I recalled being emotionally choked up about it for quite a while after. Such a sense of accomplishment. Three years later I still get choked up, when I think about it. Anyway upon arrival at Control # 18: **Gamlingay** (*Km 1352*) we enjoyed another meal. Interestingly, the closer we got to the finish and with enough time in hand, the more relaxed we got. The urgency was gone. Yet LEL wasn't over until it's over, so we resumed to finish the remaining 65 km through busy urban sections and over steep rollers in the last 25 km. The weather improved a bit by the time we arrived at control 19: **Cheshunt** (*Km 1417*). The finish. At 12:55 pm we pulled in: 101 hours and 25 minutes since our departure. Done, mission accomplished. Wonderful.

**After the Ride**

After the ride, showered, loafed around for awhile, chatted with other riders and celebrated the successful LEL completion. Enjoyed a great East-Indian supper with Gerard, Henry and Maarten, members of the Dutch LEL contingent. Next morning packed my belongings and worked on the details for getting to Heathrow some 50 km

away. My Vancouver flight would leave Heathrow on Friday at 9:00 am, rather tight for a morning departure from the Youth Hostel. A rumoured UK 100 pound cab ride was financially repulsive. To beat that, I used YH Internet to book a hotel near LHR, one with a free airport shuttle. Went to the Cheshunt Railway station and bought a ticket for UK 7.5 pounds. Rail One got me to another station for a transfer to the tube to Heathrow. On account of the deadly bomb-attack a month earlier, there were a few detours -- not to mention my wrong transfer across the Thames to Wimbledon and back -- but ultimately I made it to LHR and the hotel. Hotel cost UK 46.96 pounds. The 10.5 hour flight to Vancouver was the way I like it: uneventful. The transfer, custom and immigration clearance were very efficient and at 2:30 pm I stood on the ground in the airport terminal in Fort St. John. Home sweet home.

**Afterthoughts**

LEL is a well-organized ride. The 12 kph minimum speed allows for almost 117 hours, which is plenty to complete the distance. The start time at 8:30 am in London however makes a first day objective of Hovingham (km 81) before midnight somewhat tight. Especially considering that one has to very quickly master the art of 'left-side-of-the-road-riding' and the intense navigational requirements. An earlier start, adding some 3 hours of extra daylight would be preferable. On the other hand using the Thorne start provides the same challenge, since it requires 409 km with most of the climbing on day 1 to make it to Dalkeith. The disadvantage of this figure eight option - I think -- is that back in Thorne, one still has to do the southern loop to London. That might be psychologically tougher. An other approach would be to ride the event in five days: (1) Lee Valley -Thorne 298 km; (2). Thorne - Cannonbie: 290 km; (3) Cannonbie-Dalkeith-Alston: 298 km; (4) Alston - Lincoln: 309 km; and (5) Lincoln - Lee Valley 222 km. This provides for more daytime riding, but would leave a very tight time frame.

**The Route: London Start**

( [http://www.audax.uk.net/el/london\\_to\\_london.pdf](http://www.audax.uk.net/el/london_to_london.pdf) )

The route was laid-out such that it avoided most urban centres. Yes, there were a few of them, but no major cities. It went mainly through rural England and Scotland, passing through small places, too tiny to appear on maps and atlases. Most of the roads were narrow country lanes, paved and of very good quality. No gravel, no potholes. Riding 1,417 km without a single flat tire tells something about the road and tire quality (and possibly the navigator). In studying the route sheet I came across many places that were completely unknown to me (wonder why), but they

were on the sheet, printed in bold, so they must be true. Sure, they were! They must mean something. And, yes they did! In fact, from the route sheet and maps they took on a life, size and meaning of their own. Images much bigger, much more unreal developed in my mind. In reality however, most places were tiny hamlets, hardly known to their next-door neighbours and certainly not significant at all. No figments of imagination here: real places and people. One does not develop a sense of place by looking at a route sheet or a map. One must go there, be there and live there, that's when places reveal their meaning.

### **Controls**

The controls are well spaced, varying from 87 km for the longest and 27 km for the shortest distance. The northerly leg of 119 km between Cannonbie and Dalkeith was cut in two. The advantage is that 'LELEphant' is cut in bite size pieces (see R. Himschoot's article at [http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/pbp/ron\\_tips.html](http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/pbp/ron_tips.html)), which substantially eases the mental challenge of tackling this delicious beast. The controls were in a variety of places: community halls in Gamlingay, Hovingham, Eppleby, Cannonbie, and Boston Hall @ Ettrick; rugby clubs in Thorne and Dalkeith; youth hostels at Lee Valley, Lincoln, Langdon Beck and Alston; and last but not least an elementary school in Thurlby. The youth hostels were of course best set up for the traveling gang. Some of the community halls had seen better days, but that's exactly what gives them their distinct character. You'll see them in rural BC and elsewhere in Canada. Add the wonderful volunteer spirit, and the memory is unforgettable. After all that's what counts.

### **Course Profile**

The profile is described as flat for the first part, then the hills of the Pennines and Scottish Borderlands. This is the global synopsis, but looking at the profiles (see website: **Stage profiles:** <http://www.freewebs.com/lel-gps/stageprofiles.htm>) and recalling the ride in more detail, it goes like this. Soon after you leave the Cheshunt control you'll be taken aback by the short snappy hills over the first 50 km. Then the going gets easier as you move on to the coastal plains for the next 270 km to Barton le Willows (*Km 360*). Here the rollers are back with a vengeance until just past Coxwold (*Km 400*). A bit of respite with general rollers up to Middleton-in-Teesdale. (*Km 492*). It's an uphill battle now via Langdon Beck to Yad Moss, which at 617 m.a.s.l. is the highest elevation on the route at *Km 523*. The descent to Alston and the rollers last until Cannonbie (*Km 588*). From then on it is in and out of the saddle, the work has arrived. First the tiny wicked hills between Cannonbie and Langholm, followed by two major climbs to Ettrick, two

more to Innerleithen, followed by another three before the final descent into Dalkeith/ Edinburgh. These seven long climbs are interspersed with lots of rollers. You'd better be ready. Actually, the worst were the short, steep and mean snaps near London and Cannonbie, requiring frequent pops-in-and-out-of- the-saddle to maintain that momentum, rapid up-and-down shifting to make it over the top. Over all the beginning of LEL is somewhat similar to the PBP hills, while the longer climbs across the Pennine Chain (Yad Moss) and the Scottish Borderlands resemble a shortened and subdued version of the RM 1200 climbs, without the mountains of course. Total climbing is about 31,000 vertical feet over 1,417 km.

### **And Finally:**

I completed the 1,417 km distance at an average speed of 14 kph. Figuring that I was off the bike for about 40 hours, this left about 61 hours on the bike for an average riding speed of 23 kph. Could it have been completed faster? Yes, as shown by others. In my case for sure, but I met my main goals: (1) completed LEL in about 100 hours, and (2) rode as much as possible by daylight - after all I did want to see Britain. That last objective was lost on the ride up, but easily recovered on the way down by adjusting the plan. Faster would have meant less time at each control. My appreciation to everyone for a great ride and a great event. To Tony and the Italian crew, for your wonderful spirit of camaraderie. To Edmund, Glen (W). Jens K, and Gerard thanks for the pulls, the company and the chats. A special word of appreciation to the LEL volunteers - our unsung heroes and heroines off-road. These of course include the motorcycle gang members, who so valiantly kept a watchful eye on us. For the chief organizers Simon, Bernard and Rocco you have demonstrated an outstanding ability to pull together a great team, and..... make it work! Thank your for the memories. Last but not least to Driekje and the cheering crew on the home front, you are always in my thoughts, when I'm out there.

Time to reminisce.

## **Canadians Tackle "Land's End to John O'Groats"**

**June 11 - July 3, 2005**

*by Harold Bridge & Nancy O'Higgins*

### **THE REASON WHY:**

I am a dual citizen of Britain & Canada. And so completing a Canadian "Side-To-Side" in 2004 inspired a return to Britain to complete a British "End-To-End" in 2005. At 77 I knew it would be difficult & thus: "Now or

Never". To wait another year might mean the endeavour was beyond me. In fact, it got close to that as it was.

### **BACKGROUND:**

In 1998 I had set out on a solo 2 week tour. But I gave up riding main roads while still in Cornwall & the resulting route convolutions caused me to run out of time before Scotland.

When, during "Shore to Shore 2004", I mentioned my objective a few of the other Trans Canadians asked if they could come too. They didn't know what they were getting into!

In the end 3, Nancy, Irene & David, signed on for this classic British trek from the far southwest to the extreme northeast. Two others, Betty & Jack, also joined the group. Betty set out a couple of years ago from Land's End with one other woman. But somewhere in Somerset the woman crashed & died as a result. So Betty, at 75, was intent on getting through our tour.

The official distance that the record breakers use is 874 miles (1406kms). To tourists it may seem impossible that the Men's & Women's current records are respectively: 44 hrs 04 mins 20 secs (19.8 mph or 31.9 kph) & 52 hrs 45 mins 11 secs. (16.6 mph or 26.7 kph). These times are authenticated by the Road Records Association, (see: [www.rra.org.uk](http://www.rra.org.uk))

But tourists are not going to use the main roads those times would require. They will travel back roads, taking their time to appreciate the passing scene, reading route instructions & maps as well as enjoying local hospitality & sampling local brews. Thus the time & distance expands to 2, 3 or even 4 weeks for something like 1,100 miles (1,770 kms). To North Americans Britain seems small & therefore easy to traverse. But many roads go straight up, or down, the side of hills on gradients that can get as extreme as 33%.



### **ASSOCIATED AIMS:**

In August 2004, after my legs had recovered from the 9 day "Trans Adanac" drive bringing the support truck back from St John's, I was feeling in great shape. A few rides took on the mantle of private time trials & left me feeling disappointed I had no events in which to use this condition.

Thus I extended my 2005 vacation to allow me to send off an entry to the Mersey Roads 24 hour time trial in the Cheshire/Shropshire area of England just south of Manchester.

In fact, when I finished the tour at John O'Groats I realized I would not be able to do the necessary training for a 24 hour time trial, I was in need of rest & I tried to cancel my entry. But I was too late; I would be down as "DNS".

I had wanted time for some competitive preparation. Therefore, I decided I needed to set out from Land's End fairly early in June & the flight plan had Betty, David & I leaving Vancouver June 7 to arrive at Gatwick the following day with the intention of meeting up with Nancy, Irene & Jack in Penzance. As a precaution against airline screw-ups, missing bikes & the like, our plan allowed us an extra day to get to Penzance. We didn't need it as Murphy's Law was invoked & we had to find beds in Penzance for the night of the 8th. *Meanwhile, Nancy;*

*June 8. Irene & I left our London hosts early to walk our loaded bikes from Gloucester Road to Paddington Station via Kensington Gardens. We timidly got on & rode down one carriageway, turned off onto a narrower path toward our gate. Loud shouts told us it was a pedestrian path & brought us to a sudden stop. One of the shouters caught up with us & apologized, saying he had been hit by a cyclist. He walked with us, still apologizing. This was our introduction to cycling in Britain. Yell first, then apologize. It became a pattern.*

I had originally planned to use the CTC E2E route. But for a party of 6 there was the complication of booking accommodation without very much knowledge of the best places. Someone suggested using Bike Adventures Inc. They have tabs on all the best places to stay, they book the B&Bs & provide detailed day by day route information. All at the reasonable price of 715 pounds for the 20 day / 19 night tour.

There is a surcharge of 20 pounds per person per night for extra nights. We had 5; 2 in Penzance, one in Cheddar, our first rest day after the exhausting ride through Cornwall & Devon, one at Bomere Heath near Shrewsbury & the final rest day in Fort William. As the cheapest B&B I had after E2E was 26 pounds the cost of using a tour company such as Bike Adventures seems well justified.

The Bike Adventures contact, Sarah, expressed some concern about an elderly group such as us, (61 through 77) doing their supported tour route unsupported. Our loaded panniers proved to be the major drawback to the tour.

*We took the train to Penzance & walked our bikes to our B&B, still too chicken to ride in traffic on the left-hand side of the road. We walked back, without our bikes to the train station where Harold, David & Betty were just stepping down. They were surprised to see us. We had an "After you Alphonse" routine getting their bikes & luggage to the*

nearest hotel. We spent the next day exploring Penzance, getting the bikes put together & fixing minor details at a bike shop.

I had thought a "Shake-Down" ride would be a good idea before we set out from Penzance for Land's End. On June 10 we rode to Britain's southern most point, the Lizard, sitting as it does right on the 50th parallel. David, the only one not to install new tyres for the tour had the first of his several punctures enroute to the Lizard. Apart from a stinking climb out of Helston it was a fairly easy ride. Those riding on the wrong side of the road for the first time managed very well. It was a round trip of 52 miles (84 kms).

*Harold said he remembered the route to the Lizard as flat so we decided to ride with loaded panniers for the experience. Some flat - 17% grade!*

*Back at Penzance came the first of 3 episodes of high-grading of gear for Irene & I.*

*We mailed everything we thought we could do without back to friends in London. We had already decided lighter was better. At Cheddar (Day 5) & again at Fitz Manor (Day 10) we mailed 2 more parcels. It's amazing what we decided we could live without after we had pushed our loaded bikes up a few hills.*

On the morning of June 11 at about 09:00 we set out for Land's End. We decided upon the more direct (& less hilly) main road route of about 10 miles (16 kms).

### **Harold's & Nancy's TOUR JOURNAL:**

#### **Day #1: June 11, Land's End to Perranporth. 42 miles (68 kms).**

Route: St Just, Morvah, Zennor, Towednack, Hayle, Gwithian, Portreath, Bridge, Porthtowan, St Agnes & Trevallas.

The good thing about Cornwall is the strikingly beautiful coastal scenery. The bad thing is its popularity & thus crowded roads & villages. But with good weather we had a decent ride, albeit a rather slow one.

*The first real day's ride to Perrenporth included 17 roundabouts & we just did what Harold did. Tons of minute black flies stuck to the bag balm we had put on our faces to stop windburn. Who said cycling was glamorous?*

*We travelled up several hills that were signed 17% & several others on lanes that didn't have a gradient specified but which were steeper. Climbing high among the tin mines we could see the coast & with the stone walls it looked like a scene from a Daphne Du Maurier novel.*

*We shared the narrow road with many sheep & the cars couldn't get past.. Hedges were full of nettles, so if you hugged it too close you paid with burning pain. But we discovered that we could get desensitized. After a few days we were getting much less of a reaction - even having*

*crouched too close to some at a desperate call of nature! Harold got a broken chain....*

St Agnes sits in a dip in the countryside so there is a steep winding hill through the village & an equally steep winding climb out of the village. It was on this climb I learnt to distrust SRAM 9 speed chains, despite a few trouble free years using the old 8 speed version. Trying to make use of the downhill momentum when on the uphill I was suddenly dumped in the road when the chain broke. But fortunately, Jack was right there with a Power Link & the chain was soon back together. I thought perhaps I had made a bad job of joining the 2 ends when I installed the chain. But the following morning a close inspection found another plate had disengaged from a pin. I was able to entice it back into place, but at the first opportunity (SJS Cycles, Bridgewater) I bought a Campagnolo chain & had no more trouble once that was installed.

*Irene & Betty had taken a wrong turn just before this so we all straggled into our B&B separately & received the first of many lectures from B&B hosts about the advisability of carrying a cell-phone with us.*

#### **Day #2: June 12, Perranporth to Tavistock (Lamerton for most). 60 miles (96kms)**

Route: Mount, St. Newlyn East, St Columb Major, St Wenn, Withel, Bodmin, Mount (another one), St Neot, Commonmoor, Minions, Upton Cross, Rilla Mill, Bray Shop, Stoke Climsland, Horsebridge (enter Devonshire).

*Although only 60 miles it took us 12 hours! We had a few problems getting everyone to believe the instructions on our route sheets that got us lost 3 times & sent us on the A30 - something to be avoided with its terrible noise & narrow, broken & glass strewn shoulder. We already can't believe we were afraid of riding on the other side of the road, or that I was ever afraid of roundabouts. By a 100 of them I actually prefer them to traffic lights.*

There was a glitch due to us misreading the route instructions. At a cross roads where "straight on" was angled to the left there was a signpost; "Bodmin" pointing to the right & we were unsure which route we were to take. We went right only to find ourselves on the A30 about 5 miles west of Bodmin. We hunched our shoulders & made use of the tailwind to get it over with asap.

We did a circuit through the town as per route sheet, couldn't find anything open & finished up back at the A30 junction from where we had entered town. Here we found David who, being by himself, had followed the right route.

It had been a very difficult day & it was dark by the time we had arrived at the farm. However the lady was very pleasant & didn't seem put out by our late arrival. Just to complete the day the farm was situated at the top of a monster hill! To be positive; the weather was good, the

scenery beautiful & there were few cars on the tiny lanes.

*There's lots of climbing getting up Bodmin Moor but the views are as usual, spectacular. We reached St Neots at 5pm & since it was Sunday there was no food service at the only pub open.. A lovely man, who was there on his day off, said he would make us some sandwiches & also gave us some homemade black current ice cream with clotted cream. Wow!*

Accommodation difficulties spilt the party. Nancy & Irene were to press on into Tavistock while the rest of us detoured to the farm in Lamerton, about 4 miles NW.

**Day #3: June 14, Tavistock to Tiverton 48 miles (77 kms) (20 miles, 32 kms).**

Route: Two Bridges, Postbridge, Morton Hampstead, Tedburn St Mary, Crediton, Stockleigh English, Poughill, Cruwys Morchard.

*Everyone was aching & complaining about the route. Another sunshiny day with more climbs up Dartmoor. There was a sign on the Highway saying to watch out for sheep lying on the road. They were. Everywhere. The lambs were particularly unpredictable. There was one particularly long, steep ride with a turn at the bottom where the wind picked me up & shifted me sideways at the bottom giving me a good hit of adrenaline & a case of the shakes as I dodged sheep at 40mph. We had lunch at Postbridge's East Dart Hotel, right by the famed Dartmoor attraction, the historic Clapper Bridge.*

At Morton Hampstead Betty found a building contractor in a pub & she charmed him into using his truck & labourer for the bikes & me while his Land Rover took the other 4 to Tiverton at 10 quid each. Cheating? No, just the downside of have pre-booked accommodation. I think we would have been content to stay in Morton that night otherwise. David being David decided to ride anyway.

At dinner that evening we had guests join us. A long time cycling buddy from back in the fifties now lives in Cheriton Fitzpaine, a few miles SW of Tiverton.

Alan & Brenda Fowler came into town for a pleasant hour or so of chat & reminiscence.

**Day #4: June 14, Tiverton to Cheddar. 55 miles, (88 kms).**

Route: Uplowman, Holcombe Rogus (enter Somerset), Langford Bugville, Milverton, Halse, Bishops Lydeard, Enmore, Durleigh, Bridgewater, Chedzoy, Stawell, Edington, Blackford.

*This was a perfect day's ride for me. There was brilliant sunshine for most of it. We lost a mile or so getting out of Tiverton but the directions were pretty simple after that. The Quontock Hills were the only part that some people had to walk.*

*Nothing was open all morning for coffee break. We*

*found a pub at noon, the Lethbridge Arms at Bishops Lydiard, but after that nothing was available in the afternoon, until Bridgewater. Here was a big disappointment. I was looking forward to browsing around St John Street Cycles with its old world bike shop, museam & coffee bar. When I got there I found a glass fronted office with the sales staff sitting staring at computer monitors. Oh dear!*

Enroute to the Lizard my computer had quit working. The sensor cable had been partially damaged in transit & it just fell apart after a few jolts. For the leader to be without a computer was a bit embarrassing & I promptly bought, along with the chain, a new computer harness at SJS Cycles. I had dealt with SJS several years ago by mail order. The sales guy asked me if I had been a customer before & low & behold he brought my name & address up onto the screen.

We were fairly late at Cheddar. But the main problem was Jack. He was sick. He finished up being taken to Weston Super Mare Hospital where he stayed overnight whilst getting rehydrated. He was resigned to missing a few days while he caught up by train.

*In Cheddar David, Irene & I went out for the best fish & chips in the whole world. The piece of fish draped itself over both sides of our individual platters. Our hostess was right when she told us we would only need one order for all three of us. We didn't believe her so wasted 2/3rds of our meal.*

**Day#5: June 15th. Rest Day.**

It was somewhat wet. Somehow the tourists aspects of Cheddar got neglected. Instead we did laundry, checked e-mail, wrote cards, fixed bikes & did some shopping. In my case, 2 major bike things; chain & computer harness.

*In checking e-mails at the library I lost my first journal entry to the airwaves. Dave, Irene & I took the bus to Wells to see the Cathedral & Bishop's Palace. We returned to do some bike maintenance before dinner then Harold took Betty & I out for a delicious meal where Dave joined us for dessert.*

**Day#6: June 16. Cheddar to St Arvans. 48 miles (77 kms)**

Route: Compton Martin, Regil, Winford, Failand, Portbury, Eastern-in-Gordano, Pill, Avonmouth Bridge, Hallen, Easter Compton, Olveston, Severn Bridge, Chepstow (Monmouthshire), St Arvans.

We awoke to another damp, foggy day. We climbed into the Mendips between the towering cliffs of Cheddar Gorge. Once on top it was fairly gentle to Compton Martin. From there we crossed a valley to Regil while heading toward Bristol. Our route was to take us round the west side of the City on a convoluted & rather depressing series of side

streets to the Avonmouth Bridge. Perhaps the idea was to have splendid views from the Bridge. But as we crossed both that & the Severn Bridge in damp mist it didn't happen.

*We found our instruction confusing around Bristol & we got lost while trying to get to the Avonmouth Bridge. We were too tired to see Chepstow which has the oldest castle in Britain.*

I am renowned for my long term memory. But not for my short term memory. Where 7 years sits in that spectrum I don't know. But in 1998 I rode through Cheddar enroute to a B&B in Chew Stoke. From there I followed a bike route round the east side of Bristol to the Severn Bridge. It used, for much of the way, a trail on the bed of a old rail line. From what I remember that was much better than the route we used this time.

Crossing over the Severn Bridge's excellent path for cyclists & pedestrians (British Columbia Highways Department should make a pilgrimage) took us into Wales. It was then a relatively short ride to the B&B in St Arvans, albeit with a steep climb from the turn off into Chepstow itself. It is a pity that time didn't allow us to go into the old town. But the accommodation we had in St Arvans would have been hard to beat. In 1998 I had stayed in the old town itself.

**Day #7: June 17. St Arvans to Pembridge. 55 miles (88kms).**

Route: Parkhouse, Trellech, Monmouth, Rockfield (Herefordshire), Maypole, Skenfrith, Bagwy Lldiart, Kingstone, Madley, Bishopstone, Credenhill,

There had been some rumblings among the troops about all the twisty little lanes that took so much time with route interpretation. The initial part of the day's route would bypass a significant bit of ancient history; Tintern Abbey. As a result we detoured down a steep, winding hill into the Wye Valley so as to remedy that omission. After spending an hour or so gazing in awe at the massive ruins, (courtesy of Henry VIII) we had the choice of continuing north on the A466 to Monmouth or grovelling back up to the suggested route. David the Brave chose the latter.

In view of the rumblings I suggested we should try some main road & see how people felt after that. As it happened the very popular tourist route as far as Monmouth wasn't too bad. We were to meet David at a certain Monmouth pub but we never found it. We didn't see David again until we arrived at the B&B.

After lunch we continued on the A466 for a while. It was much busier than the stretch from Tintern Abbey to Monmouth & there were no more rumblings about twisty back roads. Having left the chosen route we managed to put in some miles going round 2 sides of triangles, including a

stretch of the A49, before getting back on route to Pembridge.

*By a miracle we eventually ended up on the right road. We phoned from a village to say we would stop & eat on our way to our next B&B. But we were reminded this was the night we had reservations for dinner! We were only 4 miles from Pembridge at this point but thought we had much further to go. We arrived at a beautiful Tudor home where we each had a private room, the only time on this tour. This gorgeous house had the biggest bathtub I had ever been in. Our lovely hostess made Welsh teacakes to welcome us with tea. Then we went down the road for a fabulous dinner - beef & ale pie, creamed leeks, carrots, oriental peas, two kinds of potatoes on the table, fresh strawberries with ice cream for dessert.*

**Day #8: June 18. Pembridge to Fitz. 45 miles (72 kms).**

Route: Staunton-on-Arrow, Lingen, Birtley, Brampton Bryan, Bucknell, (Shropshire), Bedstone, Hopton Castle, Aston on Clun, Hopesay, Minton, Little Stretton, Church Stretton, All Stretton, Picklescott, Pulverpatch, Nox

One problem related to the time of year: The spring growth was far enough advanced to obscure signs, but was yet to be trimmed. We missed our first turn out of Pembridge. But on turning round the sign was quite visible from the other direction. The lack of roadside trimming was quite obvious throughout the tour.

*We were heading for our next day off. It's a beautiful ride on a sunny day - little too hot. Another day when we can't find breaks when we need them. Either nothing is open or nothing available at the times for coffee break, lunch & afternoon snack. It was 2:30 before we found food today. Thank goodness for peanut butter in the pannier. Dave went off on his own to go faster & Irene & I got separated from Harold & Betty on the Long Mynd - a huge lump with at least a mile long climb up it, but with sensational views at the top. Irene & I had a great ride following intricate directions after lunch in Church Stretton.*

We arrived at our B&B, Fitz Manor at 6:30 to find Jack already there after his short ride from Shrewsbury station. There are about 10 bedrooms. We were welcomed by the chaos of crawling babies, dogs, & warm people who put cold beer in our hands before we had even got off our bikes. Our room was about 24 feet by 30 feet with a fireplace, & armchairs. Tea was available in the hall between all the bedrooms.

*We came down, after showering, to the dining room, about 50 feet by 40 feet, with a table that looked tiny but held 24 people who cheered us for our ride. Our hostess had cooked roast beef, cold rare salmon, potato salad, greens, pickled beets all set out for us. Dessert, she said, would be at the concert they were taking us too that evening.*

*After dinner they drove us to another manor house where the Shrewsbury Light Orchestra was raising money for the Church of St Peter & St Paul, situated about 50 feet from our manor house. The evening was called Proms in the Park, & our host, Neil Baly welcomed all the guests dressed in summer finery, some in kilts. What a fabulous experience! We got the chance to belt out Land of Hope & Glory, & Jerusalem, & sing Vera Lynn songs. And listen to better singers & musicians entertain.*

*Our hostess, Dawn Baly, was busy passing out rolled chocolate cake containing strawberry preserve, served with fresh strawberries & double cream, with wine, then finished off with coffee, chocolate & plum liqueur. Everyone was waving Union Jacks at the end. When Neil drew the raffle tickets at the intermission he also introduced the cycling Canadians & everyone clapped & cheered. What a night!*

**Day #9: June 19. Rest Day.**

I had initially expressed disappointment that the route didn't go through Ironbridge. For first time visitors to Britain the historical significance of the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution was, I felt, important. But Neil & Dawn decided to rectify that.

*The Balys drove us to Ironbridge. We saw a raft race there on the River Severn. Spectators threw bags of flour & eggs down on the participants. We went to a Roman Village, saw more abandoned abbeys & other local sites. We then went back for a late lunch & a nap. We took our hosts to a pub for dinner that night.*

**Day #10: June 20. Fitz to Acton Bridge. 51 miles (82 kms).**

Route: Bomere Heath, Northwood, Bettisfield (Cheshire) Malpas, Tiverton, Tarporley, Utkinton, Crowton.

*When we left Fitz Manor we felt we were leaving old friends & Dawn had tears in her eyes. It was the best B&B experience we had on the tour. All the buildings were chosen so we could experience the variety that existed..*

*We left early & had a super day cycling. It was only 47 miles(?) through rolling hills Dave, Irene & I had lunch on a lawn beside a canal with colourful boats lining the bank. We were into our B&B by 4.00 pm, "this is more like it!".*

*We had to cycle about 3 miles to a pub for dinner, after showering. I decided I don't like to cycle in the evening. I'd prefer a sandwich in my room.*

**Day #11: June 21. Acton Bridge to Clayton-le-Dale. 56 miles (90 kms).**

Route: Little Leigh, Comerbach, High Leigh, Broomeedge, (Lancashire) Warburton, Hollinfare, Glazebrook, Glazebury, Leigh, Hindley, Aspull, Haigh, Blackrod, Rivington, Belmont, Tockholes, Pleasington, Blackburn.

There was some apprehension about this day. We would have to deal with the busy roads & heavy traffic of the conurbation that exists between Liverpool and Manchester. However, once through, "Nervous Nellie" asked when were we going to meet the difficult bit? It hadn't been as bad as anticipated. It was also a milestone in that we were now in the north of England & the Pennines were our next challenge.

*It was a fabulous day, but long. Incredibly scenic but with just the right amount of up & down. It rained in the morning & again there was nowhere open for a morning break. But Betty persuaded a pub owner to give us tea & coffee in the kitchen. But they moved us into the pub & refused to let us pay. Bless Betty.*

We were to spend the next few days dealing with more long, steep climbs. But I think we were in better shape to handle them than we had been in Devon. Fortunately, the weather continued to be kind to us, the open moorland can be nasty in bad weather.

**Day #12: June 22. Clayton-le-Dale to Dent. 45 miles (72 kms).**

Route: Hurst Green, Waddington, Slaidburn, High Bentham, N.Yorks), Ingleton (Durham), Thorton-in-Lonsdale .

Clayton-le-Dale is really part of Blackburn & even the Ordnance Survey 1:250,000 map of Northern England doesn't show it. We by-passed Clitheroe enroute to Hurst Green.

*Irene & I went into Clitheroe to get our brake blocks replaced & went to the library's e-mail while we waited. It was necessary, but meant we didn't get on the road until after noon. Our route instructions said "Climb steeply" & that's putting it mildly. The views were as spectacular, but very different than Bodmin & Dartmoor. There were lots of cattle grids.*

As we left Slaidburn the view reminded me of 1998 when I first laid my eyes on the intimidating road climbing over Catlow Fell. The road doesn't zig-zag up the side of the hill like a civilized mountain pass, it just goes straight up. There were cattle grids as well to make sure we didn't go too fast.

An enduring vision along this stretch is going over the top of a climb & gazing at the Trough of Bowland. Late spring, the foliage at its best, the weather fresh & clear. The map denotes the area as the "Forest of Bowland". But I think building wooden ships changed the landscape. From Ingleton there was a 6 mile climb through Whernside, spectacular but slow.

*We met Harold & Betty when we were phoning our hotel from Thorton-in-Lonsdale to say we would be late. Harold & I freewheeled down amazing grades. Betty came along more cautiously and Irene took the ultimate safety*



*precaution of walking down the 33% grade. It was a plummet down through Deepdale to Dent. A man warned us that the 33% grade at the bottom ended in a sharp right turn to a closed gate! The impression was that past the gate was Dent. But no, there was a distance to go on a narrow winding lane into the cobbled streets of Dent. Access to, & exiting from the village gives a clue to the name.*

*We ended up in Dent's Sun Inn. The whole village, including the Sun, were from the 16th century. Everywhere we go people say; "You're mad, absolutely mad"*

### **Day #13: June 23. Dent to Kirkoswald 51 miles (82 kms).**

Route: Cowgill, Nateby, Kirkby Stephen, Soulby, Burrells, Appleby-in-Westmoreland, Long Marton, Newbiggin, Culgath, Langwathby, Little Salkeld, Gloasonby

My notes say we were to go through Hawes between Cowgill & Nateby. However, looking at the map Hawes is well off the direct route between those 2 places.

Except for David the route was largely irrelevant as we felt the need to "cheat" again. To arrive at a B&B on time was a benefit to us as well as the hosts. It was obvious that the climb up to Dent Station was going to take a good part of the morning & in the pub the previous evening overtures were made to "Motley" who had a truck. Jack, Betty & I waited for the train that would take us to Lazonby, 3 miles from Kirkoswald. Nancy & Irene compromised. They accepted the lift up to the station but then set out to ride from there. That was perhaps the better choice.

*Irene & I took the ride in the farm cart to the top. I paid for it because my much loved new bike was on the bottom of the stack & got badly scratched. The ride down from the top was really steep, but fabulous, ending in undulating hills followed by rolling hills. We had tea & crumpets in Kirkby Stephen & got to the Featherstone Arms in Kirkoswald 2-1/2 hours after David who had come via a longer route.*

*We went for a walk & discovered a secret garden through a door by a bridge. "Bob the Builder" told us the house we were looking at is owned by Timothy Featherstonehaugh, the longest name in Britain. Timothy owns the whole village, including the Arms. Our innkeeper told us he only pays pennies to rent the inn - less than they could get a flat for anywhere else.*

### **Day #14: June 24. Kirkoswald to Boreland. 53 miles (85 kms)**

Route: Ainstable, Heads Nook, Corby Hill, Laversdale, Hethersgill, Harelaw, Rowanburn (Dumfries & Galloway), Canonbie, Corrie Common.

Before setting out from home I had set the bike up with a 24 tooth granny ring. It put the front changer on the recommended limit of 23 teeth from the 47 big ring. It had proved okay before the bike was boxed. But I was never

able to get it right once on tour. As a result I had a few falls when the shift onto granny went wrong & the weight of the panniers took me down very quickly. The only problem was that my right knee would bang on the top tube every time it happened & the knee got badly bruised & swollen.

Before leaving Kirkoswald I found a clinic where the doctor confirmed my own opinion; it would only take time to settle down & as quitting was not an option I had to live with it. Not to be left out of things Betty had a few bruises that needed looking at too.

*We didn't follow the route today, another minor rebellion. We went into Carlisle, bought a map & followed it. No hills, same distance. Proves to us our tour company is sending us out of our way to go up hills.*

The next Landmark was immediately we crossed into Scotland. "Gretna Green" gave the opportunity for a laugh & a photo when Betty stuffed her helmet up her shirt!

The B7076 is a good road that is intertwined with the A74(M). As a result it has light traffic, albeit with the constant roar of the adjacent motorway. We invaded a busy café in Lockerbie for tea & pie before setting out on the last 5 miles to Boreland.

Our route misdemeanours didn't go unpunished. Just before we left the café the heavens opened for the most serious rain of the tour. We frantically donned rain gear within the cramped confines of the café.

*The rain quickly flooded the ditches & was sheeting across the road. But it wasn't cold & it was only 5 miles worth. Just to show us what the whole tour could have been like. The rain wasn't as bad as the wind has been for 2 hours against us before Lockerbie. Everyone got in cranky but dinner cheered us up. We dried our clothes on the room's heaters, which were more effective than the dryer some sent their clothes to.*

Our hosts had left us in the hands of some young people who seemed to manage very well. They gave us good plain grub. As it was our first night in Scotland we asked if we could have a bottle of single malt - yes, gratis. That cheered us up even more!

### **Day #15: June 25. Boreland to Lesmahagow. 59 miles (96 kms).**

Route: Moffat, Broughton, Biggar, Thankerton, Carmichael.

We stayed on route to Moffat where we stopped for coffee. People were looking at maps & tracing the route before setting out. No doubt for good reason the route appeared to be somewhat circuitous. At the same time the map showed the B7076 & later the B7078 continuing on alongside the A74(M).

*We saved 15 miles & a lot of hills by not following the route. We had a 2 hour lunch in Abington & still got in by 4pm.*

As before, it proved to be a decent road with very little traffic. My notes show I arrived at the farmhouse with 45 miles for the day. Jack & David did the intended route & arrived sometime after the rest of us. The farmhouse & its owners were nice. We were to eat out & the Farmer's advice was to go to the Golf Club, a bit too far to walk. So he drove us there & came & picked us up as well.

**Day #16: June 26. Lesmahogow to Balloch. 53 miles (85 kms).**

Route: Boghead, Stonehouse, Glassford, Westburn, Glasgow, Clydebank, Milton, Dumbarton.

An apprehension about this day existed for similar reasons to the day we braved the Manchester conurbation. But again the ride was largely on a bike route & getting into & out of Glasgow proved to be quite easy. Some of the road surfaces left something to be desired & one had to watch out for broken glass. Otherwise it was an entertaining ride.

*It was an easy day but still exhausting from trying to get everyone to agree with me on directions! I need a girl guide whistle. There was a wonderful cycle path from way before Glasgow that saw us all the way to Balloch right beside the River Clyde on the Loch Lomond cycle path. We ate lunch in central Glasgow after another cyclist told us it wasn't safe to leave the path before then.*

As it was a Sunday many people were out enjoying the sunshine. As we left Glasgow we rode past the back of large multi-storey tenement buildings. The thought of living in such a place made me shudder. The occupants were out the back of their abodes enjoying the sun, packed, as they were, into the small space between the buildings & the bike trail.

Beyond Glasgow we were following the River Leven through quiet well-treed country & across fields full of cows. By a lock (not a loch) there was a bike shop doing a roaring trade from the local family cyclists using the trail. My contribution was to purchase a new pair of mitts. The mitts contained what for me was an innovation. Between the forefinger & middle finger as well between the other 2 fingers there were loops of fabric or tape the purpose of which wasn't initially clear to me. A demonstration by the proprietor put me right. By hooking the fingers of the other hand in the loops I could easily remove the mitt.

Arrival in Balloch found the place teeming with people. Being at the southern end of Glasgow's playground, Loch Lomond, it attracts a lot of weekend business from the City.

**Day #17: June 27. Balloch to Bridge of Awe. 62 miles (100 kms).**

Route: Callendoun, Garelochhead, Arrochar, Cairndow, Inveraray.

This was to be largely a "Loch Edge Ride". With few

road options the navigation was simple. But we were very soon on a quiet back road that switchbacked over some lumpy land. This finished with an exciting descent to Garelochhead where the Ministry of Defence had intimidating fences & signs to protect the nuclear subs moored in Gareloch. After coffee we headed north along the eastern shore of Loch Long to Arrochar before going round the elbow to go down the west side to Ardgarten.

Here we turned west & started the 5 mile climb of the "Rest And Be Thankful" Pass. After so many brutal & badly graded hills it was a pleasure to tackle this climb despite the traffic. At Cairndow a couple of miles took us round the end of Loch Fyne. At a tee junction Betty & I stopped to rest about 8 miles before that evening's destination. We were to turn onto what was a busy road due to its ferry traffic to & from Oban. When we set off again I was, unknowingly, a bit too far in front of Betty, due I suppose to her taking longer to get on her bike. A commercial vehicle cut me up as he sped past & at the same moment I heard screaming behind. I stopped just in time to see Betty land in the grass on the other side of the road. Immediately 2 or 3 cars stopped to assist. Luckily, apart from a bruised elbow, there was no injury or damage. Betty wasn't able to explain what happened but it seems the commercial van had clipped her pannier & in so doing re-directed her bike across the road. Luckily there was no on-coming traffic at the time.

The young woman who helped was an "end to ender" herself. A van had stopped & the driver asked if he could help. I suggested Betty should have a ride to the Brander Lodge Hotel. The driver, a Canadian, was only too pleased to help.

This wasn't the only incident in this area. David was put in danger when a bus insisted on passing him when descending at high speed. Irene, too, got clipped by a passing vehicle & was knocked into the sidewalk.

*Vehicles around Bridge of Awe don't want cyclists on the road.*

**Day #18: June 28. Bridge of Awe to Fort William. 50 miles. (80 kms).**

Route: Taynuilt, Connel, Benderloch, Barcaidine, Appin Village, Portnacroish, Duror, Ballachulish, Onich

*This was a dream day of cycling. There were lots of easy, rolling hills. The first 10 miles were a bit scary because of the previous day's trauma but the traffic eased off after we crossed the bridge from Connel when we turned toward Fort William. We had lunch in a brand new café perched on top of the hill we climbed out of Portnacroish. There was a spectacular view across Loch Linnhe with it's much photographed Castle Stalker in the foreground.*

*Then, I had my only flat. Harold & David said I should change it myself since it was a sunny day & conditions were*

*perfect. We had just had lunch & we weren't in a hurry. I was supervised by Harold with David offering to mend my tube. Irene (bless her heart) & I did it. It couldn't have been better timing. But it was still different than doing it at home.*

*At Ballachulish we had a cream tea in a hotel where they treated us like Royalty even in our cycling garb. Dinner was at the B&B and we girls were having a pyjama party when David persuaded us to dress & go to the hotel 2 doors away for a drink & listen to a lounge singer.*

#### **Day # 19: June 29. Rest Day.**

*Played at the internet, shopped for a Scottish cycling team jersey, wandered around, got a haircut, transferred pictures to disc, bought another spare camera battery to replace the rain ruined one. Irene & Betty took the cable car up cloud enshrouded Ben Nevis & mailed cards with that post mark, returning to brag about what we had missed.*

I have been questioned about why I have a custom built bike frame with a black paint job. The reason was made apparent in Fort William. Nancy & I had our bikes locked together, one each side of a post. The B&B was a mile or so out of town & the bikes were useful for getting to & from. We left the bikes locked there for most of the morning. When we returned there was quite a crowd admiring Nancy's red & yellow bike, while mine was completely ignored. I like that.

#### **Day #20: June 30. Fort William to Drumnadrochit. 53 miles (86 kms).**

Route: Clunes, Invergarry, Fort Augustus, Invermoriston.

*Easy, fun day with one difficult 10 mile stretch along Great Glen's gravel cycle route.*

The conditions were damp which was a blessing, I think the gravel road could have got quite dusty otherwise. We captured another castle, photographically speaking. Castle Urquhart is situated on the NW shore of Loch Ness & makes for an attractive scene. The Castle is about 12 miles before Inverness, which sits at the NE end of the Loch. Just past the Castle we turned out of the Great Glen for the short ride to Drumnadrochit.

*While riding alongside Loch Ness the British equivalent to the RCAF's Snowbirds aerobatic team put on a superb display right beside us & low to the Loch. Heard but didn't see.*

#### **Day #21: July 1. Drumnadrochit to Bonar Bridge. 50 miles (80 Kms).**

Route: Beaully, Muir of Ord, Conon Bridge, Dingwall, Evanton, Ardross, Ardgay.

I had planned to meet up with a Clubmate, Roger Sewell, now resident in Dingwall. On the phone he said he would ride, 11 miles, to Beaully to meet us. He didn't want to do too much as he was riding a 50 mile time trial

the following morning. We stopped in Beaully's hotel for coffee assuming the stack of bikes would warn Roger we were off the road. Among the strong Scottish dialects we had become accustomed to, it was a bit of a shock when Roger's strong London accent suddenly disturbed the peace when berating us so-called cyclists for lounging around in hotels.

His plans were changed after dressing for a bike ride & the heavens opened. We had no rain. He, & wife Pam, drove to meet us. He gave us directions to his home that included reference to a steep hill in Dingwall. We were very grateful to the weather Gods for changing his plans. We had a pannier free ride to their home where we were treated to a fine lunch.

*We climbed for 15 miles but it didn't feel like it. At the end the wind got heavy & acted as a brake when going down hill. The side gusts were intimidating. We stayed at Kyle House in Bonar Bridge & ate down the road at a pub that would have live music later. Dave & I went back to sing ourselves hoarse, then dance him into a limp. We were cheered by everyone in the pub when we left, as the entertainer told them we were cycling from Land's End to John O'Groats. I like being treated as a Hero.*

#### **Day #22: July 2. Bonar Bridge to Betty Hill 55 miles (89 kms).**

Route: Lairg, Altnaharra, Syre

*This was an easy, beautiful day with up & down to moors which were wild & desolate. Irene, Dave & I stayed together & had lunch at Crask Inn. We all did, no choice. Crask Inn is perhaps the most isolated pub in Britain & was the only place to get any food along the way. Later, Irene fell into a ditch when a camper didn't know how wide he was. She was afraid she smelled like sheep, but came out smelling like roses, good clean dirt.*

Although the roads were very narrow the surfaces were good. There was eager anticipation of reaching the North Coast with its wide open vistas of the North Atlantic. While not yet at our final destination we had, nonetheless, ridden from the South Coast to the North Coast once we reached Betty Hill. The ride ended with a difficult climb up to the Village itself. The hotel sat right at the top & its big windows looked out over the windswept Ocean.

#### **Day #23 July 3. Betty Hill to John O'Groats. 61 miles (98 kms)**

Route: Strathy, Melvich, Reay, Thurso, Castletown, Dunnett Head, Brough.

*There were long uphills but they weren't hard to cycle. Strong winds of possibly 50 mph gusting to 80 at a guess. Did an extra 10 miles to Dunnett Head so Harold could say could say he had been to the genuine furthest north point. When we got into John O'Groats everyone seemed a bit*

cranky, possibly anti-climax, but we went down & got our pictures taken after all.

Betty cheered us up when we gathered to go out for dinner. She presented us all with Tams with red hair attached. We went out looking suitably silly. After dinner we went into the pub side of the hotel & danced ourselves to a standstill. The others left at 11:30 but Dave & I stayed on, forgetting our B&B, just across the road, locks the doors at midnight! We stayed on with our young birthday celebrant at our table offering us beds for the night followed by a "real Scottish breakfast". Another young woman offered to share her tent. We had knocked on the Door but got no answer. Finally the birthday girl phoned & persuaded them to let us in. After I had a major fit of the giggles. We slunk in feeling suitably teenagish & chastised. We felt then that we had celebrated: **"Cycling from LAND'S END TO JOHN O'GROATS."**

### CONCLUSIONS:

Jack's comment was: "Climbing, climbing, climbing, every day. Would I do it again? Certainly".

Bike Adventures had provided detailed route instructions & excellent accommodations. We can't hold them responsible for that fact that in the main we were overloaded with both too much baggage & too many years. Given our age range perhaps we should have investigated the supported tour option. But I believe the supported tour is at a specific time & may not have gelled with the timetable I had set up. As things turned out that was a waste. My plans for further touring post E2E were shelved. The 17 miles from John O'Groats to Wick the day after were difficult. I had had enough.

Bike Adventures' route engineering was an elaborate piece of work, well thought out & obviously based upon intimate knowledge of the British countryside. But I wonder if the presentation of the information could be improved? I found it difficult to keep track of my place in the instructions. One "TR" looks just like another. A tabulated form could reduce a lot of repetition. Based upon over 20 years of reading BC Randonneurs' randonnee route sheets I think I would have had an easier time with tabulated route information.

Perhaps, for future reference, it would have paid to increase the number of days so that in Cornwall & Devon we did less miles between B&Bs. There were difficult hills in the north too. But by then we were, I think, in better condition. Or perhaps brow beaten into acceptance? Added to that the road system is much less complicated & as a result navigation gets easier the further north one goes & thus creates less interruption.

In my own case there was a distinct difference between my fitness at the time of initiating the tour & when I actually started. After 2004's Trans Canada tour I felt in

good enough shape to start racing again. But during the months immediately preceding this tour I found I was having difficulty on the hills. But as a Brit an "E2E" was almost mandatory & I set out without knowing the results of the stress tests I had during the week before flying to UK.

Riding from one end to the other, whether it is across a continent or across an island, is not touring in the real sense. The end objective takes priority over seeing things or detouring to more remote points of interest as one would when casual touring. But the objective of getting from **Land's End to John O'Groats** was achieved.

And who earned the Maillot Jaune? I reckon Betty did. She is one tough old girl!

Note- who is Nancy??- retired Province Columnist Nancy O'Higgins.

## Book and DVD reviews

We had put out a notice asking for folks to send in reports on any interesting books or DVD's that they had read/seen over the dark winter months.

From Ken Bonner- *Need for the Bike*

***Need for the Bike*** by Paul Fournel -- Translated by Allan Stoekl a professor at Penn State University. Fournel is a cultural attache at the French Embassy in Cairo. This is a very easy book to read and yet describes in a very simple but engaging manner, many aspects of cycling in anecdotal form that randonneurs would appreciate. It is not a technical book.

Here's a quote: p. 8

*Every cyclist, even a beginner, knows that at any moment in his life he could have a rendezvous with a door. It could open in front of him at any time, from the right, the left, at the moment he least expects it, at a bend in the street, at an intersection, right in the middle of a straight and clear road.*

*"As an urban cyclist, I have a complete collection: right doors, left doors, high truck doors, low convertible doors ....."*

University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London --- bisonbooks.com .... looks like it might have been translated in 2001, with the translators forward added in 2003. I purchased it at the main coffee/bookstore in Ashland, Oregon.

A fun and thought provoking read.

*Gord Cook sent us this recommendation about a book not about cycling, but bush pilots-*

**"Bent Props and Blow Pots"**. It's not about cycling, but the early bush pilots and their engineers who worked in the Arctic certainly showed the Rando spirit. It's a great read and by a local, Rex Terpenning, who actually lived the life he wrote about. Published by Harbour publishing, any BC bookstore can order it in.

## DVD reviews

*By Danelle Laidlaw*

Academy Award winner Pepe Danquart has put together a fabulous DVD portraying the pain, the fear and the courage of riders of the Tour de France. **Hell on Wheels** follows Team Telecom during the 2003 Tour de France (100<sup>th</sup> year of the Tour) and shows many aspects of the Tour that our OLN coverage does not. Augmented by historical clips, roadside views, and "in the bus" footage, this DVD is a real winner. There are lots of interesting rider interviews (Zabel, Aldag, Kloden) and finish line action. German with English subtitles. 123 min + special features

Hell on Wheels was first shown in Vancouver during the Vancouver International Film Festival and is now available from World Wide Cycling Productions ([www.worldcycling.com](http://www.worldcycling.com))

**Overcoming** is an overview of the CSC team headed up by Bjarne Riis. It includes scenes from training camps as well as Classics and the Tour. An inside look at how a team is motivated, how strategies are determined and the influence of personal tragedies on the riders and the support team.

Perhaps a little too focused on Riis, this 108 min. flick (Danish with English Subtitles) does serve to show the excitement and the tensions that surround life on a team and during races. There is lots of footage inside the team support car which really makes you wonder how those drivers and riders manage. The pick of the Toronto International Film Festival in 2005, Overcoming is available from World Wide Cycling Productions ([www.worldcycling.com](http://www.worldcycling.com))

For those who just have not had enough of Lance Armstrong, **Road to Paris** provides a view of the US Postal team during their 2001 preparation for the Tour de France. This DVD explores strategic thinking of Johan Bruyneel with footage during team meetings, inside the bus and inside the follow vehicles during Classics such as Paris-Roubaix and Amstel Gold.

This 52 minute film with additional interviews with Armstrong and others shows the incredible training and reconnaissance that this team undertakes. Road to Paris is available from World Wide Cycling Productions [www.worldcycling.com](http://www.worldcycling.com)

## Event Notices

### 2006 Roger Street Memorial Ride

Sunday, February 26, 2006

9 a.m. Bean Brothers - Kerrisdale

West 41st, in the block west of West Boulevard

Casual ride - everyone welcome.

The total ride is about 85 km with a stop in Steveston for snack at about 60 km. Short cuts exist. Ride re-groups periodically so no one gets left or lost.

For those new to the club in the last few years, Roger Street was club member who passed away, very unexpectedly on Feb 23, 2003. Roger was more than "just" a club member. He was the club's treasurer for a number of years; he was one of the main organisers of the RM 1200 in 2002. In addition he earned 2 Rando 5000 awards since he joined the club in 1993 and was awarded the John Hathaway trophy for most mileage in a season in 1998. As noted by Eric Fergusson in his tribute to Roger "it was Roger who first started calling the award by the name we all now commonly use - the Iron Butt Award". He is still missed dearly by our club. -- *Editor*

### Lower Mainland Spring Social

This years spring social will be held on March 18 at Moose's Down Under restaurant at 7pm. The address is 830 West Pender St. Come one, come all. Sign up for another great year of rando riding and enjoy the awards ceremony. Prior to the evening social, there will be a social ride in the afternoon.

Please contact Michel Richard (739-6798) or Karen Smith (732-0212) for details of where and when for the ride.

### Nanaimo Populaire - March 26

The Nanaimo Populaire will be the first populaire of the year. It will explore the beautiful regions of Lantzville and Yellow point in the Nanaimo area. It starts at 10:00am at Tim Hortons south of Nanaimo. A 50km option is also available. Don Munro is organizing the ride this year. For further information contact Don Munro at (250) 746-5236.

## Other Island Region Ride News

In addition, this year Vancouver Island will sport two full brevet series -spring and summer - a 200k "fat tyre" event in August and, to wrap up theseason, a 200k autumn companion to the Mainland's "Fall Flatlander," called the "IsleLander,". And, big news this year: the Island's inaugural "VanIsle1200k," starting from Victoria, on July 5. Watch out for the VanIsleweb-pages, coming soon to [www.randonneurs.bc.ca](http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca)

Vancouver Island Schedule at:  
[http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/schedule/sch\\_vi.html](http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/schedule/sch_vi.html)

## Pacific Populaire

... 25, 50, 100 km

**Sunday, April 2, 2006, 9 a.m.\***

\* Riley Park Community Centre \*  
Vancouver

The Lower Mainland start of spring is the Pacific Populaire. Double check your clock as this ride starts on April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 9am **Pacific DAYLIGHT Time**. This rite of spring can be enjoyed as a 25, 50 or 100km ride. A great way to get a feel for rando riding, so bring a friend. Contact Madam Prez- Danelle Laidlaw for any further info at (604) 421-1717.

## 2006 Tour of the Cowichan Valley 200

The Tour of the Cowichan Valley is the first brevet of the BCRandonneur's season. The route is the same from year to year and has become a favourite of the seasoned randonneur. The ride starts and finishes in Chemainus. For those who know Vancouver Island as the Island Highway, this ride shows off some of the scenic backroads. It's a moderately hilly ride. The first half of the ride is perhaps as similar to PBP as any route in BC - no major climbs, but continuously going either uphill or down.

*Date & Time:* Saturday, 8 April 2006, 07:00

*Start & Finish Location:* Central Chemainus, probably at the Dancing Bean Cafe

*Cost:* The entry fee is \$15, and you must be a member of the BC Randonneurs cycling Club to participate.

Stay tuned to the schedule on the web site

([http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/schedule/sch\\_vi.html](http://www.randonneurs.bc.ca/schedule/sch_vi.html))

and/or the discussion list (<mailto:bc->

[randonneurs@yahoo.com](mailto:randonneurs@yahoo.com)) for finalized details.

Event organizers: Susan Allen & Doug Latornell,  
[chemainus200@sadahome.ca](mailto:chemainus200@sadahome.ca), 604-734-2504

## Lower Mainland 200

Set for April 15<sup>th</sup> this year, this ride is provisionally set to start from the Burnaby lakes sports complex at 7am. The organizer for this will be Manfred Kuchenmuller. Please check the web site for further updates as the date gets closer or contact Manfred by email at [recumbent88@hotmail.com](mailto:recumbent88@hotmail.com).

## Ready, Set, Crank!

Announcing Northwest Crank, 4/28/06-5/1/06

Mark your calendar and prepare your bike! Come join your fellow Northwest cyclists from Friday April 28<sup>th</sup> through Monday May 1<sup>st</sup> for Northwest Crank, a spring cycling festival to be held in Wenatchee, WA, hosted by the Seattle International Randonneurs. Don't miss this great opportunity to build your spring base miles while having a great time with riders from all over the area. Experience life at its purest for 4 days – ride, eat, sleep, lie, repeat! Full details are at <http://www.seattlerandonneur.org/rides/nwcrank/>.

## 2006 Ride Report

### New Years Day Ride on the Mainland

By "Arold Bridge"

Today's ride was not an official event. But nonetheless it was attended by 12 members & one guest. & so forms part of Club History.

SO: What to do on New Year's Day? Polar Bear Swim? Nah, never have, never will.

A 67 km Audax under guidance of Mike Poplawski in & around Victoria & Saanich. Ferry, truck, money, weather? Nah.

CCCTS ride from Peace Arch to Fairhaven, Bellingham & back. Yeah, I'll do that. But wait, are the US Customs insisting on passports? Mine's in the SDB. Anyway, it is a long & tedious drive to the Peace Arch area & would be even more tedious if I was turned away despite my Canadian ID card. Nah.

That left the ride ordained by Madam President. Meet Marina Park, Fort Langley @ 10:00. Lunch at the Fox & Hounds, Aldergrove & back to the Fort Pub for the wrap up.

That suits me. It is about a 20 minute drive to Albion & about 1200 metres from the south ferry dock into Ft Langley. The bike guided me in the groove to Wendells at 09:45. Time for a coffee with Bob & Patty Marsh while Susan Barr, the Penners & my guest Betty Darvell of the CCCTS congregated. It was then time to find the others. They were standing around outside the Fort Pub looking as if they wished it was opening time. Phil Jones from Bellingham, Alex Whitfield, Val White, & Danelle Laidlaw made up our party to 11 with 2 more, Roger & Ali Holt, somewhere in the vicinity.

Danelle distributed route sheets showing 103 kms. But John Bates, route designer, was not there, he was sick. By the time we had crossed the CN tracks & turned left onto Mavis Av & River Road Betty & I were well on our way to the back. When we turned onto 240 we everyone was outta sight, although we saw the Marsh tandem climbing the 240 hill as if it was being dragged through a marsh!

At 14.4 kms we were supposed to turn right (west?) off Route 13 / 264th St onto 48th Av with a 11.7km detour to get to the Fox & Hounds, on 32nd Av. That 3.2 kms due south seemed to be a chance to catch up. We were at the Pub about 11:30 to find the Marshs' ensconced by the fire where Betty & I soon joined them. A couple of faces appeared at the door, but none of the others came in, they were too busy looking for a cold north wind to ride into out Sumas Way way. But even they cheated. Instead of using the Whatcom Village Tim Hortons they cut off to the TH on Sumas Way & finished their day with a bit over 90 kms. Soon after noon we left & retraced up Rte 13. The tandem stayed on the main road while we turn left onto Robertson Crescent, 256, 248 etc. But it was only 13:15 when we got to the end of 248 I felt we had enough time for a winery detour. Snake hill was the steepest hill either of us had seen since Dent, Cumbria. But we had no plans to retrace up it. The detour used up some time but otherwise was wasted as the Fort Winery was closed.

Having a cup of tea at Wendells with Marshs' & Whitfield reminded me of my London Transport commuting days during rush hour on the Piccadilly Line. But all the patrons were very accomodating. About 15:00 a swift move north across the tracks had us in the Pub for dinner & some social chat & in my case my second Guinness of the day.

Quite lucky with the weather, a little rain here & there, not too warm, not too cold, even the wind seemed to be hiding behind trees or something and I started my 6th C-KAP year with 47 kms.

## Discussion list Stuff

Over the past while, some topics have come up on the discussion list on line that have caused some members to delve deeper into the topics. Here we have two such topics- cycling base layering and Tyres.

### Cycling base layer- old school / new school

*By Raymond J Parker with some extra notes from Scott Gater*

Polypropylene underwear was a great boon when it made its debut, back in the late 70s, thanks to Italian chemist Professor Giulio Natta. It soon caught on with active outdoor athletes and adventurers, especially mountaineers, to whom avoidance of hypothermia is a life and death consideration.

A shivering, befuddled cyclist is also at great risk, especially outside the balmy environs of the Wet Coast, and should take care to choose their base-layer accordingly. Let's face it, moisture against the skin on a cold day is no fun!

There are many new "second skins" on the market -- VarithermT, VaporWickT, PolySEnTRIC®, Capilene®, etc. -- by companies that specialize in activewear -- North Face, Odlo, Patagonia, Duofold -- most of whom seem to have switched to polyester fabrics, boasting various "wicking" technologies. Polypro and -ester are naturally hydrophobic or water repellent, however it is preferable to chemically alter fibres make them hydrophilic, so they absorb perspiration, where body heat forces them to the second layer. This is accomplished by "roughing up" the fibres.

A variety of new polyester fabrics are endorsed by outdoor athletes and are likely to work well for the all-weather randonneur. Any good system designed for X-country skiing, for instance, will function well for cycling.

The premier polypro base layer manufacturer was, of course, Helly Hansen (or "Smelly Hansen", as we used to call them, due to the original product's affinity for BO). They still make the flagship LIFA® undies. One place that carries LIFA in Vancouver is Red Sky at Night, 1520 Duranleau Street,(Granville Is.) Vancouver. A good bet is any well-stocked marine store.

Regardless of the "old school" perception, wool is still an excellent choice, especially the new superfine wool being produced by companies like Icebreaker and Ground Effects out of New Zealand.

The Icebreaker line of wool tops is a generic sport top, nothing cycling specific, but for going under a top or under a rain jacket, these feel great against the skin, stay warm when wet, and can be worn multiple times before spouses/roommates demand their removal from the immediate area. This is not the itchy coarse wool that most folks associate with old wool tops from the 70' and before. This stuff is available in different weights and styles to fit all possibilities.

Janus, one of the original Norwegian manufacturers of fine Merino wool and wool/acrylic blend underwear is still in business and the label guarantees high-quality, long-lasting traditional wear. Again, these garments will not torture your skin like a hair shirt; so you can concentrate on the pleasures of riding your 600k brevet.

Ground Effect is a cycling specific maker of clothing and their line includes some great base layers (a singlet for going under a LS wool top for instance) as well as mid layers that work well on cool/cold days that are dry. Icebreaker uses straight Merino wool (the non itchy kind) while Ground Effects uses a mix of Merino wool and polyester for their tops. Eco outdoors in Vancouver carries Icebreaker, while Ground Effects is mail order from NZ.

## LOOKING BACK AT TYRES.

*By'arold Bridge*

Dunlop were, I think, the tyres I grew up on. 26x1.25 Sports or the more sporty Sprites.

Then, for racing, Dunlop tubulars or, if you prefer, sew-ups. They ranged from the "0" (about 5oz – 140 grams) intended purely for sprinting on hard track velodromes to the "9" (about 12oz – 340 grams) a hose pipe of a training "tub". And then, with WW2 over we got access to exotic things like D'Allessandro "Imperferable", expensive, but they caused awe among the competition & that was at least as important as how well they performed when racing.

In the early fifties Michelin were researching & developing a light weight "wired-on" tyre, named the "25", intended to compete with tubulars in racing.

A friend of my Dad's died in 1951 & his widow gave me his racing trike. I think it went back to pre-WW1. But the rear axle was an original Starley which incorporated the patented differential James Starley produced "way back when". I had that built into a new frame. But as it wasn't practical to change the rear wheels to use tubulars for racing, I used regular rims with Michelin "25" tyres &

found them very satisfactory. Up until that time we had the choice of hard wearing tyres that were treacherous on wet roads or soft compound tyres that picked up anything in their path & wore out like mad.

The last time I remember using "tubs" was in 1974. My Falcon was equipped with my racing wheels. I got a months parole that year & was allowed to go to UK sans Family. I rode a couple of time trials while there, wrote a report on the North Road 24 hour time trial & did some touring. Not really recommended on tubulars. But I only had one blow out & was able to replenish my stock of spares at a bike shop.

1983, the Rando bug hit. With patience & a bit of good luck I qualified for PBP. I was riding Wolber Imperfs. These had a stainless steel wire mesh under the tread & they proved very reliable. I wore them to the point I could peel what was left of the tread off with my thumb. But using them on a somewhat stiff CBS frame in PBP gave me a lot of discomfort over the latter stages. I had bought my first foldable that year, a Specialised product. It spent most of its life as a spare strapped under the saddle so I can't comment on its performance.

In 1984 I started using Michelin HiLites & they got me through most of my rando years (up to now). I never tried the 19mm version but remember frequently passing faster groups while they mended yet another flat. I had fairly good luck with the 20mm version. But like Continental tyres they were difficult to deal with when changing a tube at the side of the road. The 23mm Michelins were much easier to get on & off.

Looking back I realize that many of my tyre troubles were due to not paying enough attention to tyre pressure.

Pure laziness on my part meant I didn't use my pressure gauge to check the tyres, just a thumb. Since I have had a floor pump, track pump, or whatever the description is, I have had very few flats. From Victoria to St Johns in 2004 on Avocet Cross 28mm tyres I had one flat tyre due to a split valve moulding. In UK's 3,200 kms in 2005 I had one puncture on a rough gravel track. And that as a result of not bothering to check tyre pressure before I set out that morning.

Ironically, before going to UK I had bought a 3<sup>rd</sup> Michelin Axial Carbon 25mm to use on the back wheel & carry the older one as a spare & it was the new one that got the small hole. The tyres had been used earlier in 2004, but replaced by the Avocets for Trans Canada.



## Only 19 Months Away!

by E.W (Wim) Kok

There was one item in the summary of minutes of the January 2006 BC Randonneurs Board meeting that caught my attention and got me quite excited. No need to worry; no contentious issue. There it was, the first sign of PBP fever. It will strike again. Who will catch the bug this time? The minutes noted "we will be making a motel booking in France for PBP 2007". Wow! Already, it is only January 2006. While it seems so far away. Then when I started counting the months left, I could not get beyond 19! Wait a minute, how many nights of sleep (and without) is that?

Images of PBP 2003 came as flashbacks. Come to think of it, I don't think the fever ever left me. Just very fond memories of this event. Having done a few of long brevets over the last few years, this one is more special than the other special ones. PBP has a magic and a mystery of its own. It is an event steeped in history. The history of the rise of the bicycle, the history of competitive bicycle racing, the Tour de France, Bordeaux -Paris, and other classics. Only one precedes them all. PBP! Pronounce it slowly P....B.....P; then go for the three words in full: Paris- Brest-Paris, and let it sink in. 1891 the first; 1901 the second and the story continues; it evolves from a competitive event to one for marathon cycling -- randonneuring - but without the competitive edge. Some of the great cyclists who won and/or participated in the Tour cut their teeth in PBP.

Everyone who has ever participated still smell the sweat, the agony, the drama, the victory and the glory of those and later days. It all came back after reading the note in the minutes. The other item that stoked my excitement was the 2005 LEL DVD I recently received in the mail. British Randonneur Damon Peacock made an hour long DVD. It first provides LEL history, and then follows the event along the route. The only BC Randonneur starring is Dave Kirsop, cycling very strong. The DVD provides a good impression of the route, the roads, some of the controls and the landscape of rural Britain. Damon provides the commentary, he inter-views riders and features organizers and volunteers. A great memento. Worthwhile for anyone considering this event in 2009 (42 months away and counting)

When I opened the case, it also had a bonus: a 2003 PBP DVD. Damon's 1-hour long footage includes video images of British PBP qualifiers, 11 minutes on the 2003 PBP Prologue, 18 minutes on PBP itself and a few other items. While watching it late one night, I suddenly jumped up and said something like 'hey I know this guy, he looks so familiar' and then I burst about laughing, for only then did I

recognize 'this guy' being interviewed while riding the Prologue. It was me. No vanity here. In the excitement I responded 'from the Netherlands', only to correct it with no, I mean Canada - obvious, because the Canadian PBP jersey gave it away. Anyway this DVD is quite neat. Good for reliving the event and capturing its spirit. It shows BC Randonneurs Tina Hoeben, Sarah Tenant, Clyde Scollan and a few other Canadians. The DVDs are available from [damonpeacock@lineone.net](mailto:damonpeacock@lineone.net). Damon Peacock, 12 Sandy Lane, LEYLAND. PR25 2EB United Kingdom. The cost is a little over 12 British pounds, including postage and handling. Contact Damon for details.

*Editor's note- Once I read this article from Wim, I wondered- so when is PBP 2007 exactly? With some help from Michel Richard and Cheryl Lynch (Michel having the task of making the reservations and Cheryl being our long standing data base person and representative with ACP-Audax Club Parisian, the organizers of PBP) we found out that the dates are August 19-24. Starts on the 20<sup>th</sup>, with the prologue being on the 19<sup>th</sup>, so get training!!!*

## D.I.Y Dept.

With all the rain this year (at least down here on the south coast) Raymond J Parker, our new Island ride coordinator, thought a little help in keeping those rain booties going would be in order. Here's Ray's method to keep those booties lasting.

### New cycling booties from old (or make sure your new ones last)

Many otherwise serviceable neoprene cycling booties come with insufficient or ineffectual soles. This is especially important to (indigent) randonneurs and tourists, who spend more time walking on their foul-weather shoe-covers. Want to put some new sole into those expensive booties? Follow this simple recipe:

- Mount booties on cycling shoes
- Repair any existing small holes in booties with Shoe Goo™ (Larger ones may need a backing patch).
- Cut out and tack a cordura nylon "sole" to the heel of your bootie (leave front uncovered for stretch).
- Sew 3 sides, then insert a few dabs of Shoe-Goo, press down nylon sole. Sew fourth side.

- Stabilize the booties on floor or bench (Assure adequate ventilation and/or wear a respirator).
- Apply a generous layer of Goo over the nylon sole and out around the front of the booty's base. Use a popsicle stick or old butter knife to spread the material. Take care that it does not run. If you are unfamiliar with the viscosity of the material, it's a good idea to do a test run on an old runner, so to speak. The Goo will settle into a smooth layer but make sure you coated fairly evenly, as it will be difficult to add more once it begins to set (after about five minutes).
- Also, take care not to goo the overshoe to the shoe.
- Dry for a day or two before use.

## Spoke Ends

### (bits and bobs of news from all over)

A road ramp that uses passing cars to generate power has been developed. Dorset inventor Peter Hughes' Electro-Kinetic Road Ramp creates around 10kW of power each time a car drives over its metal plates. More than 200 local authorities had expressed an interest in ordering the £25,000 ramps to power their traffic lights and road signs, Mr Hughes said. Around 300 jobs are due to be created in Somerset for a production run of 2,000 ramps next year. Plates in the ramp move up and down as vehicles pass over them, driving a generator. "The ramp is silent, comfortable and safe for vehicles," Mr Hughes said. Depending on the weight of the vehicle passing overhead, between five and 50kW can be generated. However, from the photographs it looks dangerous for cyclists and one must wonder if the inventor considers cycles amongst his definition of vehicles. The CTC has looked at the photos of the device & has concerns about the safety aspects for non-motorised vehicles (*article courtesy of Harold Bridge*)

### Trans Canada Trail Challenge

Trails BC is pleased to announce two Trans Canada Trail Challenge events in 2006. These events follow four successful editions staged in 2003, 2004 and 2005. More than 1200 people participated in these four events; many have done so in all of them.

In 2006, the third and fourth edition of the Trans Canada Trail Challenge events will again represent two different

regions of the province.

In Southwest BC, the Lower Fraser Valley event on Sunday, June 25 will cover a 53-kilometre route from Haney Centre to New Brighton Park in Vancouver. The Osprey Lake to Princeton event on Sunday, July 9 will take place in the Okanagan region of the province. It follows a 52-kilometre course along the renowned Kettle Valley Railway.

Participants choose to walk, bike, ride, or run up to 53 km. In the Lower Fraser Valley they will have the opportunity to combine cycling and walking. The level of difficulty for both courses is considered easy to moderate for a trail experience. Outside of some climbing after the 35 km mark in the Lower Fraser Valley event, the routes mainly follow dike trails, easy pathways, or rail grades.

The focus of the Trans Canada Trail challenge events is to fulfill the spirit of the Trans Canada Trail by being non-competitive and personally challenging. The trail event also: provides educational opportunities through the assistance of an interpretive guide; involves the communities along the trail; and provides strategies and services for the benefit of participants.

This unique Trans Canada Trail experience is hosted by Trails BC. All proceeds go towards trail construction and maintenance of the Trans Canada Trail. Go to the Trails BC website, [www.trailsbc.ca](http://www.trailsbc.ca) <<http://www.trailsbc.ca>> for more information and to register on-line, by fax or by regular mail.

Not getting enough climbing in our brevets?? How about this:

A comprehensive climbing tour of the Pyrenées Mountains that is created in the spirit of Randonneurs. 2,000km, 43Cols, 2 Tour de France Stages, Extended Raid Pyreneen(788km 23cols sub 90hrs) 35,000m of vertical gain, over 14 days and for only UKP:680 USD:1190 including meals. For more details go to [www.yjadventures.com](http://www.yjadventures.com).

**Finally- don't forget to renew your membership this month. Mail in your membership form and waiver (along with \$\$) or come to the spring social and do it there.**