



# 'Miles' Davies

**Chris Davies** has already cycled 914,000 miles – and he's still going.  
**Rosie Downes** got him to stay still long enough for an interview

Chris Davies has liked long rides as far back as he can remember. At the age of three he set off from home and had covered half a mile before he was picked up. His father had ordered the troops at Golden Hill Fort on the Isle of Wight to leave the barracks and go and find a small boy on a bright red tricycle. 'I wanted to find out what lay beyond the garden gate,' says Chris, with a chuckle.

Chris got his first new bicycle in 1950: a BSA three-speed hub-gear racing bike. His first recorded ride was on 5th August 1950, logged in an exercise book bought for one shilling. He developed a preference for longer rides, and as his records grew, so did the distances.

In November 1954, Chris joined CTC and made connection with the local DA in Portsmouth. He then began riding time trials with their racing offshoot. 'I started with 25-mile time trials – 10-mile time trials weren't done then, as they were regarded as boys' events. Then I started doing 100-mile time trials, and then 12- and 24-hour time trials.'

Chris worked at CTC from 1962 to 1966, and led his first tour in 1963. Since then, he's led and been part of countless tours. It's hard to pick a favourite, he says, but there have been plenty of memorable ones. He speaks fondly of tours in France, New Zealand, and Argentina, but thinks the most exciting was a 1973 tour to Israel and Cyprus. At the end of the tour, his group returned to Tel Aviv to fly home – just in time for the start of the Yom Kippur war. All flights out of Tel Aviv were suspended.

'So we had an extra four days' holiday. We seemed to be the only foreign visitors who weren't scared stiff, but we all had memories of bombings during the war. The advice was: if you can't get into a shelter, get under a substantial table – which the Americans didn't think was good advice at all!'

Another memorable tour was the Bikecentennial, a ride across the United States to commemorate the US bicentennial in 1976. Chris and six friends rode from Portland to Denver in four weeks. He remembers the immigration officer's response to their purpose of visit: 'You boys are going to drive bicycles across the States? You're going to need an extra two weeks to heal up!'

He doesn't have a favourite bit of touring kit, but he prefers saddlebags to panniers. 'I never go out without the saddlebag, partly because I like to have a camera with me.' He's got three bikes on the road at the moment: a custom-built Condor; a 1965 Allin racing bike; and a Hobbs of Barbican, which he uses for utility cycling. 'I bought it secondhand from a colleague at work



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just after I left school in 1955 – it's still going strong.'

Chris has recorded over 914,000 miles, and at 74 he still covers more miles in a year than many people manage in a lifetime. 'How much I do varies according to the season – but I'm still covering 10,000 miles every year. The most I managed was just short of 24,000 in a year.'

By the end of 2005, Chris had ridden more than 10,000 miles for 50 consecutive years. That year coincided with the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar, so he decided to celebrate by flying to Spain, riding to Cape Trafalgar, and then riding home to Trafalgar Square. 'When I went to book my flight to Seville, the travel agent asked: "What about coming back?" I said, "I'll be flying back on a Condor!"'