

# TRAVELLERS' TALES

END TO END SPECIAL

Plan to ride it?  
Get CTC's End to End pack  
from [ctc.org.uk/endoend](http://ctc.org.uk/endoend)

## Honeymoon grand tour

NEWLYWEDS SONYA AND TIM GRUBB HAD A DIFFERENT SORT OF HOLIDAY IN MIND

**WHEN WE** announced our engagement and our honeymoon plans, they were met with equal wonder and dismay. To the usual wedding preparations were added kit buying, practice runs and, unfortunately, a knee injury that left the whole plan in question. Yet, a week after our wedding, we were chauffeured to John o' Groats by friends, and set out southwards towards Land's End. It was to be B&Bs all the way – it *was* our honeymoon!

While the south sweltered in the August heat, it was damp and beautifully cool in the Highlands, with the first day producing a half-hour soaking that thankfully wasn't repeated. Although longer, our route down the west coast of Scotland was spectacular. On Arran we met a Canadian couple who were also on an End to End honeymoon!

We had thought long and hard about our north-to-south route, but we were lucky: we didn't notice the sun in our eyes or the wind. We did notice the benefits of 900 miles of cycling before hitting Devon and Cornwall! At the end of August, after 21 days, we reached Land's End to be greeted by friends and family.

As for the doubters: the knee never gave out; we had no punctures; only a couple of 'unceremonious dismounts'; and a bit of road rage. It was a wonderful and romantic honeymoon that cemented our relationship and gave us a wonderful achievement to look back on.



## Blind tandem ride

Jamie Cuthbertson was the stoker on a tandem LEJOG with sighted friend Nick Strange

**T**his was my second attempt at doing the End to End, having failed to complete it last June when our support vehicle blew its head gasket near the Severn Bridge!

I'm totally blind, having been injured in an explosives training accident when I was in the Army. My tandem pilot was Nick Strange, a PE teacher and keen triathlete, while my brother Kenny drove our support vehicle – a borrowed campervan. Kenny supplied us with hot cups of tea and bacon rolls.

We took two weeks to do the ride. We had only one

major soaking, as we approached Kendal. The worst moment was when we fell off the tandem at about 5mph, as we turned into a lay-by, leaving us with gravel rash. Cornwall and Devon provided some short, sharp shocks: Stibb Cross and Great Torrington were tough work on a tandem.

But I haven't laughed so much for a long time. We had hours of banter, on and off the bike. I enjoyed the ride from the very beginning, setting off at Land's End once more after being forced to stop last time. The scenery was wonderful, I'm told, and just being

out in the wild and travelling through the peaceful landscape was fantastic.

My top tips for long-distance cycling would be to get a good support crew: it was great having Kenny as backup, and the campervan gave us a lot of flexibility. Eat loads, of course, and make sure you take Sudocrem and baby powder!

The whole trip has left me wanting more adventure and more of the kind of camaraderie that comes from working in a close-knit team, much like it used to be when I was in the Army. It was a fantastic experience.

Jamie and Nick were accompanied by a campervan support vehicle, so didn't have to look for accommodation – or cups of tea

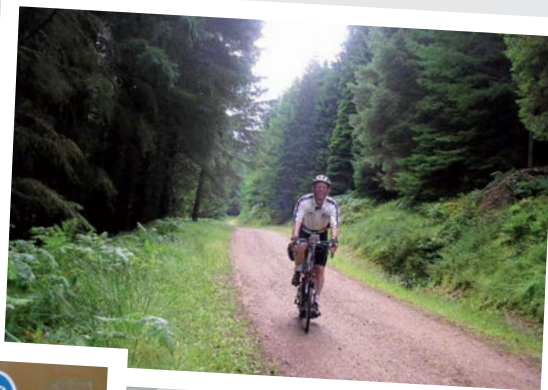


Sonya and Tim Grubb rode south from John o' Groats. It wasn't 'all downhill', but it meant that they were ready for the steep hills of the South West

## We need you!

Cycle wants your Travellers' Tales. Write or email the editor – details on page 78 – to find out what's required.





## Riding into retirement

FRANK BURNS MADE THE MOST OF HIS NEWFOUND LEISURE TIME BY RIDING LEJOG AGAIN

**LAND'S END** to John o' Groats has become everyman's Everest. I last rode this iconic route in a group in 1982. On my solo 12-day journey last July, I caught an early southwesterly wind. En route, my Moulton made the acquaintance of another Moulton ridden by a German gentleman, my bivvy tent flooded under a Devonian rainstorm, and I crossed a mist-enveloped Dartmoor, later to discover there were no beds in Taunton.

The crossings of the Avon and Severn road bridges were dramatic and gusty, followed by the beautiful pastoral landscapes of the border country and the ascent of the Long Mynd. I carved my way through the narrow corridor separating the Wirral from Greater Manchester, sought accommodation advice at Preston Police Station and, no, they couldn't offer me a vacant cell! I then laboured over Shap Fell, heading towards the Scottish border.

Through Burns country to the Highlands, negotiating lochs, mountains and glens, I was startled by ruined castles in the most remarkable locations. The scent of wild raspberries did not belie their fulsome flavour and, when crossing the wild Sutherland Flow, still empty from the clearances, incessant rain and wind drove me to seek shelter in a Wendy house! Between Bettyhill and John o' Groats I met my nemesis: a 40mph headwind for 55 miles, rain lashing my bespectacled face. But the arrival at the 'top' was sweet.

My retirement from a career in teaching had to be heralded by a landmark experience and, with just a half-day's planning and preparation, it proved to be the perfect prologue to a story yet to unfold.

## End to End at 80

Never having ridden it, Clive Williams decided to do Land's End to John o' Groats for charity

**A**pproaching the age of 80, one thinks of the many things one wanted to do in life but for some reason missed out on. For me, one of these was to ride LEJOG. So when a Scottish friend offered to ride with me from Carlisle to John o' Groats, I decided to have a go at the defining age of 80.

Two more friends chipped in for the first six days, which meant I was on my own for only two days out of the 15 I took. I used my best bike – an Italian Basso steel racing bike, with 700×32mm tyres. Attempts to find a smaller inner ring that would fit proved abortive, so I ended up

with a 30×28 bottom gear – too high for an 80 year old carrying full luggage, I discovered!

Using the CTC route with minor deviations as far as Leominster, I worked out my own route through Cumbria and the west coast of Scotland, the Great Glen and the Sutherland coast, a total of 1,060 miles. The weather was kind the first week. Then I reached Scotland...

Of course, the key to an expedition of this kind is preparation. I found that even at the age of 80 it is possible to train the legs to a very high level of fitness. Trips to Majorca in April, a solo tour island hopping in Croatia in June, and

finally La Semaine Federale in early August did the trick for me. This meant that my daily recovery over 15 days was sufficient to keep going. At no point was I in danger of giving up.

Recently my four year old granddaughter looked steadily up at me and said: 'Grandpa, when people are really old they go to heaven.' At the age of 80, I can't deny being old, but I'm not yet *really* old! Heaven will have to wait a while longer.

I raised sponsorship for Cancer Research UK on this trip. Anyone wishing to contribute can at [www.justgiving.com/clivewilliamson80](http://www.justgiving.com/clivewilliamson80).

Clive planned to enjoy not endure the trip: 'The cycling, the countryside, the challenge, the food, and the beer – I was going to experience the best of British.'



Frank Burns arrived at John o' Groats a couple of days ahead of his original schedule and used the time to explore Dunnet Head and the Orkneys

### DROPPING THROUGH YOUR LETTERBOX IN TWO MONTHS:

#### CARBON ROAD BIKES

His and hers bikes on test

#### EARLY SEASON SUN

Have road bike, will travel south

#### CLIP IN, CLIP OUT, WALK

Clipless pedals for mountain biking, touring and commuting

#### QUICKER COMMUTING

How slow and steady can beat fast and sweaty

NEXT ISSUE