



Eden Valley

# Newsletter

AUTUMN 2016



issue 51

## Editor's notes

Thank you everyone who has sent material for this edition of our Newsletter. In this edition you may see and read:

1. John O'Groats to Lands End (Peter A)
2. A thank you (Mrs Ludo)
3. Confessions of an Overweight Virgin (Les M)
4. An interview of Laurie E (in his own words)
5. Better Together (Peter K-O)
6. How do we ride, some thoughts (our Chairperson)
7. The Editor's (personal) comments on 'Better Together'
8. Louth – next year's week away (Claire B)
9. Comments received on our Tri-vets (per Geoff A)
10. Alex Knox died 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2016 (copy of Alison's 'few words at the wake')

Please feel free to send your photos, thoughts, news, views and accounts for the next Newsletter.

Please send material to [news@edenvalleyctc.org.uk](mailto:news@edenvalleyctc.org.uk).

I hope you enjoy this Edition. Nigel L

### 1. John O'Groats to Lands End.

Arrived John O'Groats 3<sup>rd</sup> June after an overnight stop at Loch Ness. I was 16 when the planning started. It was to be Youth Hostels then. A campervan and Driver is a lot better.



Figure 1 Lands End

Set off from John O'Groats on the 4<sup>th</sup> June for Bettyhill our first planned stop. I followed cycle route 1 and Ann took the main road. We agreed to meet at the Bettyhill campsite and keep in touch by mobile. (first mistake). The terrain was not too hilly and the wind not a problem, got to Bettyhill in good time which was closed when we arrived.

We decided to carry on and find another campsite. We met up at a smart café just before Tongue,

Ann set off towards Durness to find a site. The hills had arrived, so had the rain and it was only 5 degrees. I had no money for a B&B no phone signal and no sign of a campervan. After 90miles I was looking for a cave. Got to Durness after 95miles and there was the van, what a relief.

Stopped at Durness a couple of days to see out a storm. We set off heading for Gairloch hugging the west coast where possible. Visited Scourie, Lochinver, Audmair, Ullapool, Poolewe on the way.



Figure 2 Scourie to Ardmail

Climbing 1822m between Scourie and Ullapool. Stunning scenery, a must for all cyclists, you turn a corner and get hit by a view you could never imagine. The adventure was going pretty much to plan, stopped at Gairloch for a few days, had a boat trip, visited Inverewe Gardens and did some local rides.

Set off on the next stage to Lochcarron, a rendezvous with my eldest daughter and two Grandchildren was planned. The route took me to Applecross and over the famous Bealach na Ba the highpoint of the ride. I used the Hybrid bike with the low gears and disc brakes. A bag of chips at Applecross then 2050ft to the top. The top did arrive eventually and no walking! a stunning view and cheers from German tourists. Met up with the family for the weekend at Lochcarron.



Figure 3 Applecross Peninsula

Moved on from Lochcarron to Skye over the new bridge, Skye was busy so had difficulty finding a site.

Took the Ferry to Mallaig and stopped at Loch Eil near Fort William. Left Loch Eil as soon as possible to escape the midges. The next stage was to follow the coast to Kintyre. A mixture of busy roads and cycle tracks took me through Fort William and Oban stopping after 80miles at a remote place called Ardfern.



Figure 4 Lochcarron to Skye

After two days at Ardfern and a visit to Loch Awe set off down the west coast to Lochgilphead heading for Campbeltown. stopping at Muasdale. Had a couple of days to tour Kintyre, visiting Cambeltown calling in on my Aunty Bunty and cousin Hamish near Machrihanish, the remaining two of the Morrisons at Campbeltown, also visited Saddell , Paul McCartney’s “Mull of Kintyre” famous beach.



Figure 5 Loch Eil to Ardfern

Caught the ferry to Lochranza Arran and had a couple of days to go round the Island. Left Arran via Brodick to Ardrossan and headed back to Carlisle stopping the night at Loch Ken. Arrived at Carlisle 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 802miles 14869m ascent and half a stone lighter.

Back to Scotland to baby sit for a week and replace all the cogs on the Audax bike before starting the second leg to Lands End.

Left Carlisle on the 15<sup>th</sup> July. Headed south to Morland café, Orton, Sedbergh, Dent Deepdale, first stop Clapham near Ingleton. The next day turned out to be the hardest day of the whole journey.

61miles 1729ft across the Pennines to Holmfirth. A very interesting part of the journey, over the hills to Colne and Hebden Bridge, following the canal to Sowerby Bridge and then the cycle route



Figure 6 Scammonden Reservoir

under the M62 to Meltham and Holmfirth. I was beaten by the hills this time, had to walk at Holmfirth.

Spent three days at Holmfirth, Went on a Last of the Summer Wine coach trip, visited the café and sampled the fish and chips.

Left on the 19<sup>th</sup> July next stop Ashbourne across the Peak district. Trying to avoid the busy main roads was the main problem. Found some cycle tracks, the ride down Spend Lane to Ashbourne was the highlight .

A couple of days at Ashbourne then on to St Weonards with a stop over at Much Wenlock.. The roads were not too busy and visited some interesting places. Stone, Telford, Ludlow, Leominster and Hereford.

Left St Weonards on 22<sup>nd</sup> July for Clevedon, down the Wye valley and across the two bridges, Severn and Clifton. It was very wet, got a soaking. Clevedon to Shillingford was interesting. Sustrans came to my aid again finding good routes to Bridgewater following the Sedgmoor Drain and river Parrett.

Made base at Plusha near Launceston for the last part of the journey. The ride to Plusha was eventful, the planed route was unexpectedly changed due to road closures. After Tiverton had to take the high road to Murchard Bishop, got a call from Ann because the van had stopped in the rain and would not start. Set off to find the van and got a second call, the van had started all was well.

Took the A30 from Oakhampton, it was like a motorway, not sure if bikes were allowed, I was the only one, hit a brick and had a puncture I was glad to find the camp site.

The next day did a circular trip to Wadebridge. across Bodmin Moor to Port Isaac (something to do with TV Doc Martin). Lots of traffic very busy places.

Set off on 28<sup>th</sup> July from a Bacon Butty Van near Wadebridge for the last day. Not too far 67miles, the



Figure 7 The End

strong head wind made it heavy going. The traffic was very bad, not a good place to go cycling, took lots of detours to avoid the A roads. Portreath was a pleasant surprise, ice cream van, people swimming and sunbathing, a very sheltered beach. Penzance was a nightmare, just a constant stream of traffic, glad I live in Cumbria. I expected the road to Lands End to be quiet, it's a dead end, very busy. Lands End was heaving, a lot different from John O'Groats 1622 miles and 28094m ascent away.

Got a photo, set off back to Carlisle the next day, time was tight going on Holiday.

## **2. Ross Cottages (a thank you)**

Thank you from a non-member and non-cyclist for including me in the cycling week and making me very welcome.

I know the weather wasn't brilliant, but I really enjoyed the week bird and seal watching. I managed to walk over 38 miles during the week.

The highlight of the week was on Friday when I visited Chillingham wild cattle. As I was the only person, I went with the warden in her little truck. We were able to get very close to the cattle and one calf came right up to the truck. A very good end to the week.

Looking forward to Louth.

Anne (Mrs Ludo)

## **3. Confessions of an Overweight Virgin**

So, the 130 mile Yorkshire Dales Cycleway at first glance seemed a great route for a virgin cycle camper astride the red Bob Jackson with newly acquired £99 Wild Country Zephyros 1 tent from Cotswold. Having highlighted the route from leaflet and website onto a proper tatty pink OS map (most on Sheet 98), had second thoughts on seeing some 30 uphill black arrows – but perhaps many could be bypassed with weighty camping gear?? Reckon route comprises much of the Yorkshire Etape many of our members successfully achieved earlier in the year, but were likely too head-down bum-up to appreciate its beauty .....

What a super if lumpy route! First day Ousby to Hawes via Mallerstang then foolishly despite the arrow avoidance philosophy, up and over on the 'proper' route from Askrigg in Wensleydale to Swaledale (a few pushes required – but after that managed all arrows) to camp at a super little £6 site in Reeth after 58 miles and 8 hours - all times include stops. Rather nice to carry one's house, doesn't matter where you end up! Excellent pub pie and pint, next morning packed just before a deluge to follow the initially wet and windy proper route up and over almost into Leyburn. Long drying pull up Coverdale, Kettlewell, Wharfedale to Grassington and loop via Bolton Abbey nearly into Skipton to lovely quiet £7 free unlimited hot water farm site and DIY pasta & tuna at Appletreewick (pronounced Aprick), 54 miles 9.5 hours . Tipped it down during the night - new tent performed perfectly - but sunshine greeted my breakfast porridge and jammy roll. Gorgeous day up and over (what's new) via Calton to Malham - umm, bacon & egg sarnie - and all the arrows to Malham Tarn without dismounting. Stainforth, Settle, Clapham, Ingleton then long yet lovely drag up Kingsdale to Dent passed by a 15 year old myopic gap toothed future Olympic cyclist leaving me for dead. Finally the big climb to Dent station (58

miles 9.5 hours) for last train back to Appleby where Ruth collected me before fish 'n chips – confess I skipped the Dent to Hawes last 8 miles of the full loop.

Absolutely loved it as a possible prelude to French Med to Manche next year. Bike 'naked' 10.5kg, pannier rack & rear panniers only containing gear and sleeping bag with tent & sleeping mat bungeed across the top, plus bar bag 17.5kg. Hey gurus, is this light or heavy and must I saw a bit off the toothbrush and dump the blow-up doll next time? Total distance 170 miles, though average riding speed 9.8 mph makes EV Moderates look like Froomie in comparison!

Les's Virginal tips: keep it slow and steady on the ups and downs and don't go on for too long, especially if somewhat overweight – and above all don't fall off .....

#### 4. **An Interview with Laurie E**

*What is your favourite cycle holiday?* Nowadays I do not have cycling holidays. However, in the 1990s Margaret and I cycled in the Netherlands. Due to their wonderful cycle routes we found the experience to be truly relaxing.

*Who is the most interesting cyclist you have met?*

Rene Menzies. In the early 1950s I was cycling up the Great North Road towards Girtford Bridge when I saw this cyclist ahead pedalling like a metronome. When I caught him up, I was astonished to find this was the great Rene Menzies attempting to break the world record for the greatest mileage covered in a year. By the time I had met him he had already accomplished more than 100 miles that morning and was aiming for York that evening! He was a most interesting Frenchman who achieved much during the war and I got the impression that he was a very tough character. The weekly magazine Cycling was following his progress closely and he achieved the remarkable distance of 61,561 miles.



*What is the funniest thing that has happened to you when cycling?* There have been many hilarious moments but in recent years one stands out. I was cycling up the steep hill north of Hayden Bridge desperate to relieve myself. I had to concentrate on climbing before finding a suitable place to stop. I climbed a stile over a stone wall and whilst relieving myself my body began to shake violently and my left leg shot forward, vibrating. It was a desperate moment and I was wondering what was happening to me. You can imagine my relief when I suddenly realised I had leant against an electric fence!

*What is your favourite day ride?* This is difficult as I have many favourite rides. When I am prepared to have a very hilly ride I prefer to cycle towards Bewcastle and that area. In that part of the world I often stop to listen to the peace and beauty of the countryside. Normally all one can hear are the sheep and the birds. Furthermore, there are one or two other places where I stop and, at the same time as listening to the silence, I can admire the stupendous views of the Solway Firth.

*What do you do as well as cycling?* To be truthful – nothing! I have no idea how to do DIY even though on my bench I have many tools they look good! I am an avid reader, particularly the classics – English, French and Russian literature, Thomas Mann of Germany and American writers. I find biographies particularly interesting because one seems to learn so much about life. I read British military history and have found the history of the United States fascinating. I have always since a young lad enjoyed classical music although I cannot read a note! To my mind the most moving music is the human voice – without instruments, i.e. Monteverdi, William Bird and Thomas Tallis.

*Where do you recommend for a good coffee or lunch break when out cycling?* Pelossi's at Langholm where the young ladies know exactly what I would like – and that is: scrambled eggs on toast, beans on toast and Pelossi's ground coffee. The other favourite haunt is the Pot Place at Plumpton

*Tell us something that not many people know about your cycling past.* On my eighth birthday in 1942 I was introduced to cycling. My father and godfather made a 26" wheel, 19" frame with dropped handlebars, a superb little bicycle. It was a wonderful birthday present. My father was a cyclist and my godfather was an established member of the CTC. From that moment my world opened up and I never thought of anything else other than cycling through quiet country lanes.

At 16 I rode my first 10 mile Time Trial with a time of 25 minutes 40 seconds. By the time National Service was calling in 1952 I had achieved a 1.0.33 for a 25 mile Time Trial (I was 16<sup>th</sup> out of a field of 120) and was within 3 minutes of the winner. After National Service I commenced racing and was under the hour for a 25. In 1956, with two team mates, Eric Beauchamp and Ken Craven, we won the national 25 mile team championship. In 1957 we won the national team championship at 50 miles in championship record time. As a team we won many awards around the country. I am now a life member of the Crescent Wheelers Cycling Club. When I returned to cycling in the late 1980s I rode in time trials and participated in 3<sup>rd</sup> category road races.

*If you could purchase any bicycle what would it be?* I really have no idea except to say I now only have two machines. One is carbon fibre and ideal for day rides and the other is a tailor made machine to my design equipped with a Campagnolo set. It is made of Columbus tubing, three chain rings and mudguards. It is 5 lbs heavier than the Bianchi however has a shorter wheelbase and is the most comfortable of the two bicycles. This is the one I use for mini tours e.g. cycling 82 miles to Amsterdam to visit our son.

*Sum up what cycling means to you:* Except for nearly ten years in Canada and fifteen years in the United Kingdom when I was a distance runner, cycling has

been a way of life. Nowadays I use the exercise, which we all know to be one of the best, to measure my physical condition.

## 5. **BETTER TOGETHER?**

When I was a lad of 14, still wet behind the ears and never having cycled more than about 30 miles, I joined my local cycle racing club with a mate from school. Now, Bradford Wheelers had a wide range of abilities, much wider than EVCTC. Many riders were sub one hour 25 mile time trialists (no mean feat in 1965!) and others indulged in road racing; one was soon to turn pro and spend many years racing in Europe. However, as new members we were looked after at the back of the group, who always cycled together two-by-two. No one went off the front; no one felt the need to prove his fitness (there was only one 'her' and women thankfully don't generally have these tendencies!) and no one got left behind.

The system was: the front riders would 'take the wind' for as long as they were comfortable (but no more than a couple of miles), then part, and on a clear stretch of road the group sailed through in between; the front riders taking a rest at the back (or second last so any 'newbies' could stay at the back). Repeat, until the original pair are once again at the front. The camaraderie in the group was great. As our cycling progressed after a few weeks we did a short spell at the front then gradually did more of our share of the work. The fitter riders tended to stay at the front longer, but crucially, not faster. It was considered bad manners to 'half wheel' your cycling companion. If anyone found the pace uncomfortable they would shout "what's the rush" or similar and everyone would ease up a bit. No-one got left behind.

In winter most of us rode an old bike in fixed gear despite the West Yorkshire and Dales hills and it was expected that we would have mudguards, a rear mud flap and lights. The group stayed together on all but the very steepest climbs. We often saw both the Halifax and Bradford CTC groups out on the road, always cycling in a group. A year or so later, on new bikes with 'sprints and tubs' my mate and I were the ones being asked to ease up!

Work, family and 10 years playing squash intervened and I got back into cycling through renovating my ancient 1937 Hetchins tandem (bought from a school friend for £6!) and riding with my late first wife, Eileen. Now, Eileen quickly got very fit and we set up the first Tandem Club local group in West Yorkshire, an idea which quickly spread nationwide and exists to this day. We enjoyed many rides with this group and despite occasionally sprinting for signposts (!) no-one got left behind. The group coped with the incompatibility of a mix of tandems (slow on hills) and solos (slower on the flat and into the wind) without splitting up. We rode up to 25 miles, as far as Wetherby, to the start of rides and got into cycling much longer distances. We also had Wes Mason, the ex-European track champion cyclist in our midst so had to work at our fitness to keep up. That said, we were sometimes the ones being asked to ease up. On occasions I thought Eileen was trying to overtake from the tandem rear (stokers) seat! No-one got left behind.

Always trying to keep up with the leaders is a wearisome business. It puts pressure on one for the whole ride (that is most of the participants at EVCTC) and who needs this? It makes 'leading' a ride difficult as riders are frequently scattered over a mile

or more of road, well out of sight and earshot. One is constantly wondering how far ahead the leading group is and when or where they will stop and wait. Their ride is intermittent with frequent stops. When the back markers catch up breathlessly the 'leaders' set off, fresh from having had a short rest which those at the back are denied. Repeat all day long! Unless, of course you are Nigel, who selflessly volunteers to be 'back-marker' which should not be necessary but is most commendable nevertheless. An accident or 'mechanical' is impossible to communicate to those up front. Yes, I like to go out for a thrash on my local 30 mile circuit but I do this on my own so that no-one gets left behind.

Riding as a group is easier. It helps a club 'gel'. Camaraderie improves and, importantly, it makes the club more accessible to new members. It is easier to get to know other members. It is safer. Rides are easier to lead. Fitter riders don't have to keep stopping. There is no pressure.

I have recently, and quite justifiably been described as a Luddite due to my aversion, nay, almost complete incompetence with all things digital. But at least, the Luddites stuck together and no-one got left behind!

Better Together, yes; but don't get me going on the EU!

Peter K- O

## **6. How do we ride, some thoughts**

On a snowy, sunny Sunday in April, Dallas and I attended a British Cycling leaders' course in Maryport. Both of us had decided to become Breeze ride leaders; Dallas, because she wants to get people healthy and she wants to save the world (I mean, the environment, but it comes down to the same thing, doesn't it?) while I was doing it because I would like to encourage people to join in a group activity which I think they would enjoy.

The course was a mixture of classroom and outdoor activity. I must admit that the initial assessment of our cycling skills was a bit difficult, cycling on the tail of someone else in rather small circuits with my arm on Dallas's shoulder and hers on mine, but we survived without an accident.

British Cycling are strong on cycling two abreast. At the 'top end' of the cycling world, this is an excellent way of conserving energy and improving technique, but how would it work for people at the less experienced end of the cycling spectrum?

By the end of the course, I was converted. We were a group of seven, plus our tutor. On the road, by cycling two abreast close to the wheel of the person in front, we became a single – albeit slow-moving – vehicle. And my bossy self came to the fore (literally) as the rear ride leader who cycles to the front at the junction to steer the group safely into the next road. For a group of nervous, out of practice, cycling re-starters – for whom the Breeze programme is designed – I could see that it would really work.

Would it work for EVCTC?

Karen's ride set out from Dalston the following Wednesday. There were, I think, 16 of us. We set off, single file, out of Dalston over the railway bridge. On that stretch of road, in my opinion, there was nowhere with sufficient visibility of oncoming traffic to allow a car behind us to overtake – so why didn't we ride two abreast, to make sure the rear car driver did not take a chance, meet another vehicle coming the other way and push one of us into the gutter?

We are all familiar with the cry of 'car back' – but what does it mean?

- Watch out; there's a car behind you
- There's a car behind you; get back on to the correct side of the road
- There's a car behind you; single out
- There's a car behind you; pull over when convenient and let it pass.

Our code of conduct (see website) says: ' Switch to single file (outer rider of each pair dropping back) at the leader's shout of "Singling out" or, if limited road width demands it, "Car back", to let a motorist overtake. We use "Car back" and "Car front" rather than the traditional "Car up" and "Car down", because these shouts should refer to direction and not gradient'.

The only times we singled out on the Breeze course was either when told to by the ride leader or where our own eyes told us it was not safe to ride two abreast – a line of parked cars on one side of the road and an oncoming vehicle on the other meant there just wasn't room.

Anyway, towards the end of Karen's ride, when a small group of us had separated out to make our own way home, Dallas and I thought to put some of our training into practice, Dallas riding at the front to indicate the right turn and me scooting through; 'coming through on your left...coming through on your inside' to tell them that the road was clear.

And did they appreciate it? Not a bit of it! So, ok, the road along Burgh by Sands isn't very busy and they are all experienced cyclists and could see for themselves that the road was clear, so maybe it wasn't the time of greatest need. But I think the real issue is that most of us think we are competent cyclists and we like to cycle at our own pace in our own way.

And, as long as we show proper understanding of other road users, good awareness of the group we are cycling with and appropriate respect to our leader, then what is wrong with that?

## **7. The Editor's (personal) comments on Peter K-O's 'Better Together'**

I am mentioned as being 'selfless' for riding at the back. This is not the case, I enjoy it, be it on a 'faster', 'moderate' or 'majestic' paced ride.

I am very comfortable with the group being spread. The practice of some getting ahead allows traffic to more easily pass the group particularly on our narrower roads. Cycling in a tight group has its advantages but seeing the countryside go past is not one of them.

I am not an advocate of 'one size fits all'. Most of us, I venture to suggest, include fitness as an important aspect of our cycling. I have found that cycling sometimes with the faster riders has stretched me and improved my fitness. I doubt that I would have extended the range of my cycling to include the odd sportive and some loaded touring if I had had to cycle on my own to get fit/fitter.

A joy of our club has been the range of aspirations as to distance and pace. I think we should seek to build on this.

## **8. Post Easter Week 22<sup>nd</sup> April – 29<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

Kenwick Woods near Louth

Very many thanks to those willing and able to pay an early deposit which has enabled us to secure six bedded lodges at a good price. There are also four bedded lodges but these are more expensive and anyone wishing one would need to get four people together; let either Claire or Dallas know and obviously pay the extra.

One of the pleasures, to me, of these trips is the great variety of rides on offer. Every morning, come 9.30, there are always plenty of people volunteering to lead rides, something for everyone to enjoy. Long may it continue!

Remember to put the date in your diary.

## **9. Comments received on our Tri-vets 15<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

- I have just returned from a fabulous day cycling - the Eden Valley CTC/Cycling UK Vets event which is held every three years. A choice of a 100 mile or 100 km route was available, taking us through the stunning 'lowlands' between the Northern Lakes, and the Pennines. Don't be misled...low does not mean flat!
- 6 groups set out from Newton Rigg College, with 2 marshals in each, and I joined 6 others on the figure of 8 route out from the college, south east to Appleby, and then west and north back through to Penrith and the college for lunch, then north west to Caldbeck, and on north east to Dalston, then south back to the College. (Eleven and a half hours later!)  
We were so well provided for at each of the 'fuel' stops.....great sandwiches and cakes at the snack stops and the opportunity for a hot meal at lunch time. Best of all.....fruit crumble for tea! With plenty of drinks available - all provided and served by members of the Club in village halls along the way. We tried not to dally.....we had a long way to go and the weather was being remarkably kind to us considering the potential for rain!

- The event is arranged as a social one, and we were a group of very mixed experiences, including visitors from outside of the area.  
I am very pleased to have completed the event as I had decided to use this personal challenge as an opportunity to raise funds for LED.  
I have reached about 4/5 of my £1000 target, so heartfelt thanks to all those who organised the event; and encouraged me along the way.  
Your company and support is much appreciated.
- I started cycling with intent, 3 years ago, and was encouraged to join the CTC, as it was then known. Since then I have been introduced to some super cycling routes; met great people; learnt so much about the bike and cycling technique.  
Thank you.

### **10. Alex Knox 6<sup>th</sup> September 1930 - 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2016:**

‘As I only joined Eden Valley CTC in 2010, most of you will have known Alex a lot longer than I have.

I can’t remember when I first met him, but I only need to think of his twinkling eyes to make me smile.

One of my memories is outside Jen’s house when he wanted to see our campervan – a modern VW. He was smiling as he recalled his many adventures in his van with his family and his ‘dear wife’.

Alex told me he always cycled at the back of the group but I knew he had met his match with Nigel. I remember him as excellent company on rides down the Mallerstang valley and up towards Melmerby, always doubtful he would be strong enough to stay with the group and always keeping up as long as the conversation was interesting.

It was a privilege to visit Alex last year, with Nigel, to interview him for an article in the newsletter. Alex was an excellent host, making us lovely omelettes, but not getting round to doing one for himself. He had a wealth of stories – we were there a very long time!

How many people didn’t know that Alex knew Sir David Attenborough? Sir David was Alex’s commanding officer during his National Service.

Alex was a very active contributor to the community; after retirement he became a CAB volunteer and, when he was told he was too old for that, he volunteered for Community Alarms.

Alex struggled to put into words what cycling meant to him – it was a lifetime resource – it was ‘everything’. Life without a bike, to him, was unimaginable.

He was a lovely gentleman and my life is richer for having known him.’