

Special ride report by
Wayne Hickman

LONDON—EDINBURGH—LONDON

LEL background

The first London – Edinburgh – London was held in 1989 starting in Doncaster, the organiser's home town. A 1300km ride, 29 starters 26 finished all pommies.

This year saw 602 entered but only 550ish bothered to turn up. Pommies 277, Italy 85, France 24, Scotland 7 and Australia 8 to list a few of the nationalities!

LEL 2010

Sunday July 26 at 8.30gmt we set off from Chesant railway station car park 50 riders at a time 15mins apart! (North London just outside the M25 ring road). Overcast day with rain expected later but that did not dampen our spirits as we had a full tummy thanks to Joe's café. 4quid for a big brekkie & cappuccino. We all stayed together for at least um now let me see, 2.8km an amber light, some went, and some did not? The did nots did better in the end, as the went forgot to turn right and ended up 2km behind the did nots, we all saw each other at the first control but ended up breaking up into different groups?

The Gasman (Rob) & the Doctor (Hari) teamed up as they had b&b booked along the route as that was their plan? Spinal (Eamonn) & Mr Mac (Colin) stuck together for the first day and a bit before they got board with each others company

or was it the debate over black pudding? The Ex-Nanny (Wayne) and Bones (Nick) rode together on and off for the first day depending on navigational skills (say no more). I rode most of the day with 2 Americans & a French lady who I was told used to hold the

Americans, that lasted all of 5mins. If that was backing off good job they were not pushing it. The good thing about riding with these people is that they had GPS gadgets so I didn't have to keep stopping to check the route, which saved heaps of time especially at night! We parted company at Coxwold as I was having a 3hour nap in nice dry cloths due to my bag drop; the bed was just the floor of the village hall. Eamonn, Colin and I left this control together around 5am, by the time we got to the next control, Colin was gone, but I did bump in to him at Dalkeith and the next time was back in London at the pub? There were 2 other riders from Eastern Australia but have forgot their names, (sorry boys). I think one pulled out due to weather!

There was a time extension due to the bad conditions (which I don't agree with but that is another story). You had to take your shoes off at some of the controls due to the wooden floors. Normally



record for going up Mònt Ventou seven times in 24 hours. We had a tail wind for a good part of the day but I still say 28/30km hour is too fast on the first day of a 1400km ride. I told these riders to go on without me as I was backing off! "So are we" said one of the



Controls included:

Gamlingay (65km out & 1336km back)

Thurlby (151km out & 1251km back)

Washingborough (216km out & 1184km back)

Thorne (321km out & 1110km back)

Coxwold (411km out & 1021km back)

Middleton (463km out & 969km back)

Alston (538km out & 894km back)

Eskdalemuir (633km out & 799km back)

Traquair (678km out & 755km back)

Dalkeith (716km Edinburgh).

this is not a drama, until you have all your wet weather gear on over your shoes and then it turns into a mayor operation! You then have to put it all back on! The food at the controls was just fantastic I did not hear one grumble be it from a belly or a mouth! Yad Moss (598m) is the name of the hill up to Alston youth hostel control. The wind and rain were not very pleasant to me on this part of the ride; I sheltered behind a transit van parked in a lay-by to put more layers on. Just that little bit of shelter was amazing & I really regret not wearing my cycle helmet as the hail stones hit me on my frozen ears. You know you are high up when you see snow indicator poles on the side of the road. On my return trip to Alston at the hostel there was a rider who had hypothermia and later went to hospital. It was here that I met Eamonn and we rode out in to the foggy morning and down Yad Moss pedalling downhill because of the head wind. Eamonn even had ice cream for breakfast at Middleton on the way back, why I hear you ask, because he could! Not dobbin' on any one but I did see one of our riders keeping out the cold with a nip or two of

whiskey at Traquair control. A volunteer was going round with a bottle pouring nips for riders! It was at this control you could go for a sleep on the carpet in a room behind the stage, unless you happened to be laying next to the loudest snoozer in the whole of the universe who was sucking the paint off the walls, at which point I gave up trying to sleep and hit the road around 3am. This was a good thing it turned



out as I got to see the night lights of Edinburgh from the top of the hill that over looks the city. It was 716km to Edinburgh due to a loop round Lincoln which had a secret control. Still the return to London is only 685km so the half way point is more than half way. Yippee!

At about 100km to the finish I waited for my buddy at a t-junction until the heavens opened up and I sheltered in a bus shelter along with 2 other riders, the fact we were all soaked through and could not get any wetter made me laugh, once you are that wet no amount of water will make any difference at all. Still the end was in sight.

Many thanks to Cathy who had a can of Guinness waiting for me at the finish! Sorry about losing your hubby Eamonn and making you stress. Colin got home in 96 hours, the rest of us all finished within three hours of each other 105 hours+. One rider did it in just under 60hours non-stop. I personally had a great ride my bum & saddle were the best of buddies the whole time. My only wound was the tongue on my left shoe which wore the skin away and made a small sore. My small fingers are just getting the feeling back into then now from the pressure on the handlebars.

Lessons learned from this ride- wear your hat - especially if hail stones are expected.

"My bum & saddle were the best of buddies the whole time".

.....Wayne

