

## Channel hopping

**Matt Dunlop** explored the French coast near Cherbourg with friend **Tim Warner** and Tim's 15-year-old son Mike

We caught the fast ferry from Portsmouth to Cherbourg, after holding up the queue of cars while we struggled to get the French woman in the ticket booth to understand us. We were cycling up the coast to Caen and a ferry home three days later.

In France, we enjoyed the coastline of the Cherbourg Peninsula along the D116 and marvelled at the quality of the French roads and the courtesy from drivers. The only vehicle that got a bit close had English number plates!

We passed through the little fishing port of Barfleur, where William The Conqueror set out for England in 1066, and Richard the Lionheart did so in 1194. We continued on our way to St Vaast La Hogue, which Tim had visited 32 years earlier on tour with his dad. After much haggling in our schoolboy French we booked a gîte.

On the road again the following day we

followed the D14 to Quineville and then turned onto the coast road into a very strong headwind, which whipped spray off the sea and stung our eyes with sand from the beaches of the Normandy landings. We passed monuments and memorials to the brave young men who made the liberation of France possible, and finally arrived at Utah beach. Turning onto the D913 we cycled towards Carentan, featured in the TV series 'Band of Brothers' and fought for by the American Airborne forces who landed on D-Day near to St Mere Eglise.

On the final day we took advantage of a lighter headwind and continued east, passing Pointe du Hoc, Omaha beach and the impressive little town of Colleville sur Mer where various tableaux show the buildings as they would have been on D-Day. We finally cycled past the beaches of Juno and Sword and memorials to



the British Servicemen who fought and gave their lives on those dark days of 1944. Finally we arrived in Ouistreham, where we had a chance to visit Pegasus Bridge – famously held by British Airborne troops – before catching the evening ferry back to Portsmouth.

## North riding

Walker turned cyclist **Adrian Thompson** recalls his first long ride – across Yorkshire

Having taken up cycling as an alternative to walking during the Foot and Mouth crisis several years ago, I steadily built up my day-riding distance from initial 20 or 30 miles to 50. As I began to ride further, I swapped my mountain bike – which I did two tours on – for a comparably fast, sleek Orbit tourer.

When I was asked by a good friend to keep him company on a ride from Scarborough to Leeds, which he planned to do in June, I agreed. So I found myself one Saturday morning on the early train from Leeds to the coast, poring over a road map, loosely planning a route from east to west. Arriving in Scarborough, I announced: 'There's no going back now'. My companion replied: 'That's all there is to do!'

We set off at 10 o'clock, immediately grinding up a long hill heading west on the A170. Eventually we left the traffic behind and joined minor roads, which would now form the majority of our route. At Malton, we saw hordes of other cyclists. This was the day of the Great Yorkshire Ride (Wetherby to Filey). We made the most of some puzzled looks from group after group, as we rode past in the opposite direction, trying hard to look as if we were already on the return leg!

Beyond Malton, we meandered along mile after mile of quiet lanes, past the grounds of Castle Howard,



through the Howardian hills, and then to Easingwold. At this point, over coffee, we debated if the ride would be the 80-plus miles we had hoped. We continued towards Boroughbridge to cross the Ouse, constantly sipping energy drinks from our Camelbaks.

The last 20 miles seemed never ending. Our final obstacle – the undulating road through the Washburn Valley north of Otley – was tackled with aching limbs. I finally made it back home at eight o'clock, having covered 87 miles. I had tired legs, a sore ankle, but a great sense of achievement. I hadn't been sure I could ride that far, but the barrier was purely mental and I can't wait to do it again.

### NEXT ISSUE

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