



● Roop with Christian Prudhomme (his right) and Gary Verity (his left)



● Fifty British riders joined the three-day event

THE TOUR OF MENORCA

With Teesside clubmates Peter & Alec, Mike Newton rode a Spanish sportive

For the last few years, Peter had been keen to take part in the Vuelta a Menorca, a three-day sportive on the island that runs in late October. In 2013, Alec and I agreed to go with him. We were part of a 50-strong British contingent; the rest of the riders were Spanish.

It didn't cost a great deal, only about £240 each. The flight was £70, three nights' hostel accommodation was £72, bike hire was £52, and it was £47 to enter the event. We cycled in a peloton at an average speed of 16mph for 15 miles on day one, 70 miles on day two, and 35 miles on day three. It was like being part of the peloton in the Tour de France. Peter and I even had to steer between a couple of bikes when two cyclists touched wheels and fell over.

The terrain was flat or undulating, with only two proper hills: S'Enclusa on day two, a climb that took us to 275m; and Monte Toro on day three, which topped out at 358m. The temperature on the three days was between 18 to 25 degrees, so we escaped the cold British weather.

The organisation was excellent. The reception on day three was remarkable, with delicious food and plenty of wine. Everyone was presented with a certificate on stage.

Organisers Arturo were pleased to have so many British cyclists and hope to get more in 2014. It runs from 17-19 October; see menorcacicloturista.com for details. My ride video is on YouTube – search for 'gasbagsmike' and 'menorca'.

Le Tour in Yorkshire

Roop Singh savoured every moment when the Tour visited his home city of Leeds

As soon as it was announced that the Tour de France was coming here, I reached for my diary. Nothing was going to get in the way. The week leading up to the Grand Départ, I cycled around bits of the route. Everywhere had sprung to life with bunting and bicycles painted yellow. Late on the Thursday night, I decided to paint mine too.

Next morning it looked a bit rough but it was dry, so I rode it into Leeds,

only to bump into the top brass of the Tour: Gary Verity and Christian Prudhomme. Gary pointed to me and said the spirit of the Tour was catching the imagination of the British people.

On Saturday 5 July, I was in the centre of Leeds by 7am. The atmosphere was electric. As the racers made their way to the official start line at Harewood House, I took a shortcut to Harrogate. Other than the Cavendish fall, it was a brilliant day. I left Harrogate at 7pm having put in a full shift.

On Sunday 6 July, I decided I would cycle to York for the start, catch the train to Sheffield to see the finish, then cycle back to Leeds. In Sheffield, I was told that the race would finish at Don Valley, north of the city. As I made my way to the finish line, I was on the route; although it was closed to vehicles, it was still open to pedestrians and cyclists.

To my amazement, the lines of fans started cheering me up the hill. I felt as if I were in the race! At the top of the hill, I could see a long straight stretch in front of me. The crowd cheered as I pedalled full pelt past them. I had just lived my dream. Then I waited for the race, seeing the lads fly past me on the final 100m stretch. I was one happy bunny. The ride home was bliss.



● Roop painted his bike yellow for the Grand Départ



● Crisp starts don't diminish the best autumn days.

A CYCLING STAYCATION

David Hubbard convinced his family to swap a holiday in Greece for a UK cycle tour



● Careful luggage distribution overcame family objections

Autumn sunshine

Susan Cronshaw cycled through Hardy Country on the last warm day of the year

Setting off on a crisp October morning, I cycled past West Bay's golden cliffs and unpretentious harbour, on the B-road to the thatched village of Burton Bradstock. After that I took quiet lanes, mostly following NCN 2, which links Dover to St Austell. I rode through a gentle landscape of small dairy farms with crows flying low over fields of golden stubble. Colourful hedgerows dripped with blackberries and rosehips.

The climb out of Little Bredy was a gut-wrencher but I was well rewarded with a view looking back down the coast as far as the white chalk cliffs at Beer in Dorset's neighbouring county of Devon. The climb continued towards my goal, the Hardy Monument. Not the literary Hardy, but Vice-Admiral Hardy, Captain of HMS Victory. Views from the monument extended down to the Fleet and Chesil Beach, and towards the Isle of Portland.

A blast of a run downhill to Winterbourne Abbas and a brief foray onto the busy A35 were followed by a beautiful 10 mile stretch on the route of a Roman road, high along a ridge, back towards Bridport. With glorious views into the far distance, buzzards circling, and an almost total absence of buildings

or traffic, the landscape had a truly remote quality.

The next signpost stipulated that the road ahead was unfit for HGVs. With grass growing down its centre, I could see why. It skirted around the top of Eggardon Hill, then hurtled down steep and narrow winding lanes into pretty Powerstock. The descent continued through dark tunnels of trees and leaf-covered mud-spattered lanes, into Lodgers and thence into bustling Bridport, where I took the former railway line back to West Bay.

I had cycled in sunshine all day, in shorts and T-shirt, in mid-October. I could not believe my luck.



● On the ridge top, heading for Bridport

HOW I WOULD I prevent a mutiny when I suggested cycling around southern England instead of our traditional holiday in Greece? Maybe if I promised my wife and son they would not have to carry anything? Maybe if I didn't mention distances? They agreed!

I'd bought a tandem two months earlier. For our luggage, I invested in an Extrawheel trailer. My daughter really enjoyed being on the tandem, and the trailer carried all the weight easily. It was great fun. Everyone was remarkably cheerful and up for it. We have all cycled quite a bit but never all together for several days on end.

We did lots of miles, despite the fact my wife gently said that three hours a day would be quite enough. We covered over 300 miles in total. The longest day was 92 miles.

We live in Guildford and cycled to Salisbury via lovely quiet lanes in Hampshire, then headed across Wiltshire to Bath using NCN 24. The ride through Longleat was the highlight. Our route out of Bath was hard but very quiet as we went northeast through the Cotswolds. We stayed over in Gloucester, and then headed east to stay with friends in Witney, dodging heavy downpours. The route home took in some lovely scenery across the Ridgeway. We followed NCN 5, and then NCN 23 from Reading to Guildford.

Well done, family: you did great! Maybe we will do it again some day.



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