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There are few cycling events I find worth doing twice, never mind three times. Once you've ticked the box, that's it surely? But the Dunwich Dynamo has drawn me back again and again.

The Dun Run is a 182km ride through the night from East London to the Suffolk coast. This year was the pearl anniversary of the event, which started with just a handful of riders making the night-time voyage in 1992. Now riders are believed to number in their thousands but no one really counts, which says everything you need to know.

So it was that I found myself with my friend Grace, a group of riding buddies, and a few hundred other cyclists, rolling out of London Fields at 7pm for a very long night indeed.

DYNAMO DRAG

Pulling onto the main road out of Epping, it was immediately clear that I had made a mistake: the people we were with were riding much too fast. Within 30 minutes my legs were already beginning to tingle, and on a long drag I was having to push to maintain pace with the group.

As luck would have it, the group pulled alongside another bunch and I spotted a photographer friend, Simon, spinning within. Taking the opportunity for a six-month friendship reunion, and a convenient break as they were chipping along at a more modest pace, I stopped for a chat. After little more than "hellos" and "how are yous", I could already see the Team Time Trial World Championships disappearing into the distance, and I shot off to catch up. Not again, I thought...

This was my third Dunwich Dynamo. I first rode it in 2013 when an audaxing co-worker convinced me it was a great idea. It was billed as a social ride with pub stops but one bloke turned up with a power meter (a big deal back then) and all my doors were blown off in short order. My overriding memory of the event is the temptation I felt to bail out when I saw the soothing glow of a Premier Inn sign at the side of a dual carriageway. The second time was, on reflection, worse.

At the time I was as fit as a broken fiddle. I'd barely been riding and, with a long tour on the horizon, thought it might be a crafty way to shape up a bit. It was not. Through a cruel twist of fate, my friend's frame had broken, a replacement shipped and, with nowhere else to turn, he'd asked me to swap over all the parts at 1am on the day of the Dun Run. I agreed. Later, after zero hours sleep, I got my own bike and set off from London Fields. I was soon in a state of abject ruination. I crawled into Dunwich a broken man.