

## Sea 2 Sea Tour 5-9 September 2022

The Sea 2 Sea tour from Whitehaven to Sunderland was completed last week by a group of extraordinary cyclists, who completed the exceptionally hard climb route in four days. They hired vehicles to get all the riders up to Whitehaven on Monday the 5<sup>th</sup> September and shared driving in a support van that carried luggage and support tools to the next overnight stop, with drivers and co-driver cycling back to the group coming up, so all got some good days cycling.

The nine riders started in Whitehaven with a celebratory glass of champagne and a bike dip in the North Sea at the C2C start. The riders were: Andy Gilbert, Lorraine Platt, Steve Davoile, Peter Farrell, Brid Reeves, Suzanna Baynard, Julie Bruce, Peter Farrell, Jean Brayshay and the organiser and leader Martin Lee.



**Ride day 1:** The ride started with a modest ride of 31 miles on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> September with a ride from Whitehaven to Keswick, with the first hills rising to just over 300 metres. Just a nice warm-up to what was to come. We had the first of only two punctures of the whole tour, on the Whinlatter climb, and at the same time Jean threw off her chain when changing gears on the climb.

Andy and Steve took the support vehicle on to Keswick, riding back to meet the group before we got to the morning coffee stop, and having a strong climb up from Braithwaite before meeting the group.

We arrived in Keswick just after lunch. Steve taking advantage of the support vehicle had brought his paddle board, taking advantage of Derwent Water. The girls took advantage of the great shopping with it nearly costing Andy a considerable amount as Lorraine fell for a pair of top design trainers. Not forgetting the charm of Keswick and stunning scenery. The day being a short riding day was overall a success.

**Ride Day 2:** This was to be a hard long day, 52 miles, Keswick to Alston climbing Hartside at 550 metres.



We set off early with Peter volunteering to drive the support vehicle to our next stop and riding back to meet the group for lunch, and probably having the hardest ride of us all having to climb both sides of Hartside, winning the admiration of the whole group.

We stopped at Greystoke for coffee, enjoying pleasant weather, good company and stunning scenery. We then cycled on to Langwathby for lunch, but we were in the shadow of Hartside with some trepidation of the climb to come. Then Peter arrived with a smile and his laid-back ways soon had the group on top form again. The group set off for Hartside looking forward to the challenge, completing the hill with determination and strength that I know this group has within each of them. They didn't only climb this hill but in each of their ways did it in style Each one of them should be proud of this

achievement. As anyone who knows the ride down to Alston, it is a lovely down hill ride, again with stunning scenery all around but this is the prize for achieving the climb. Everyone slept well after the good hearty food at the hotel and the over whelming feeling of achievement.

**Ride day 3:** A short but even harder day. Alston to Stanhope is just 26 miles with a further 3 miles to our accommodation but some of the hardest hill climbing on the tour.

We set off from Alston to retrace our route out to Leadgate to get back on the route with a strong climb and even stronger decent down to Garrigill, and then a 25% climb out of the village took us all by surprise, some of us needing to zig-zag from side to side to get to the first very steep part of the hill up to B6277 where Brid and Lorraine left the group to cycle back to Alston to pick up the support vehicle. We had arranged to meet up in Stanhope for lunch. After the girls left we completed the rest of the hill and the steep decent 25% down to Nenthhead, then another two climbs, one being Blackhill through to Allenhead for coffee and to give us a chance to dry off from the rain. The next climb was straight after coffee out of Allenhead, a long and steep climb, but the rain held off and we had another long descent along the river and past the old Grove Rake Mine making the efforts of the climbs worthwhile. Such a lovely part of the Pennines and what a way to see it. One more hill over and down into Stanhope, the girls had found a lovely place for lunch and then off to the Cross keys at East Gate to overnight.

**Ride day 4.** Friday had come so quick. This is a longer ride with the last hard hill out of Stanhope and then a long downhill to the coast at Sunderland, with a short diversion to see the Angel of the North.

Andy and Steve, our two strongest riders, left early in the support vehicle to park up and pick up our next vehicle for the long journey home, then cycle back to the oncoming group.

The main group set off to the hill, out of Stanhope. This was the fourth day of climbing, and this hill was letting us know that riding in the Pennines is all about the challenge and not to forget it. Jean hadn't finished with the hills and had continued on up the hill to Muggleswick Common but a quick phone call got her back to the group and back on track. All down hill now on the Wakerley Way, past Consett and on to Stanley to turn off the C2C route, but the weather was not kind to us. The rain was torrential, and in the rain we

missed the planned lunch stop at Tanfield, only to find a charming and friendly little café in Causay. We contacted the boys and they diverted to the new stop. We dried off and refreshed ourselves and probably stayed longer than we should have, but needs must.

We now took the old Bowes Railway Path; the path was a little rough in places but this route took us directly to the Angel of the North.



We now took the main road A182, sticking to paths and cycle ways until we crossed the C2C route and re-joined the route down to the coast and finished at the Promenade finish.



I would like to recommend and thank on behalf of us all, for making our tour run so well:

Enterprise van rental, Coventry.  
Keswick Park Hotel, Keswick.  
Keys Hotel, East Gate.

Sommergrove Halls Hotel, Whitehaven  
Cumberland Inn Alston.      Cross  
All the café stops on route.

**We had a great time.**