

Martyn's Cycle Challenge 2012

Dover to Durness in aid of the Church of Scotland's work in Ekwendeni, Malawi

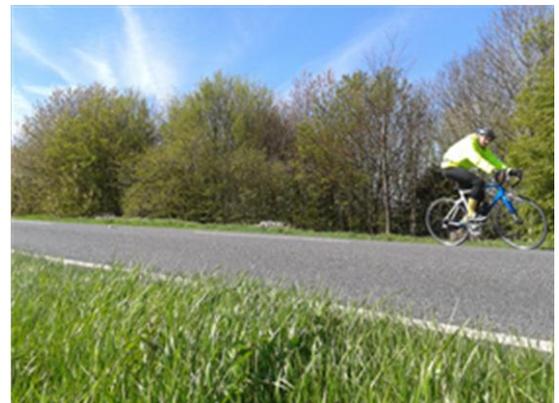
Between 12.30 a.m. on Saturday, 28th April and 2.00 p.m. on Saturday, 4th May, Martyn, the Pastoral Assistant working with the churches in Annan and Gretna, cycled the 720 miles from Dover to Durness in Sutherland. He was supported by his Son, Peter, who followed with spares and kit, etc. in a support vehicle.

Here's Martyn's account of his week.



Back home now after a gruelling week cycling against the wind. Peter and I managed to get to Dover by 12.30 p.m. on Saturday, 28th April. It was dry but the rain soon came and I got completely soaked from head to foot. I picked up a puncture close to Dartford and by the time Peter arrived to change the tube I was shivering with the cold. We decided to cut that day short and went back to start the next day (which was also wet!) although it cheered up a bit in the afternoon.

Sunday took us from Dartford to Stamford, again against the wind, and it was challenging to find your way through the towns - cycling in the countryside is so much easier! The following day was a little better, still against the wind, but no rain, although I did cycle through a couple of floods which was quite exciting.... We made it to Garston, just to the east of Leeds, after getting a bit lost.

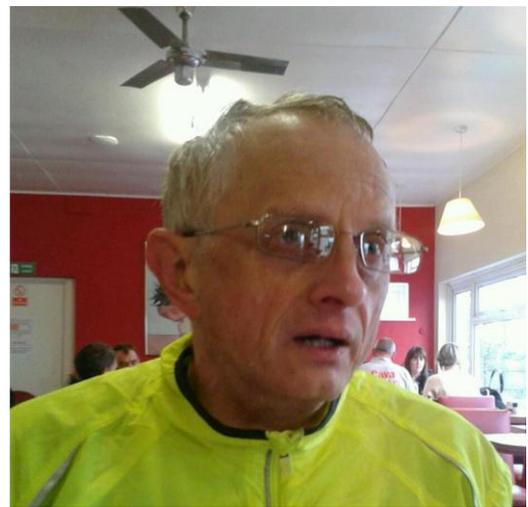


Garston to Corbridge (just east of Hexham) was also hard, cycling against the wind. Wednesday took us though the border country, challenging at any time as the hills are quite steep, but again it was against the wind. Getting through Edinburgh posed additional challenges as the roads I'd identified were not available to cyclists. The alternative route had a very poor surface – not overwhelmingly comfortable!

We stayed overnight in Edinburgh and then set out on the 100 miles or so to Newtonmore on Thursday morning. We stopped in Pitlochry, which was lovely, like mid-summer and warm and sunny, but on the A9 the wind was still from the north. That night the weather forecast said there would be 23mph wind from the north and on Saturday, snow at Cape Wrath – what!!! Peter and I decided to drive to Durness, at Cape Wrath, on Friday morning and then cycle back with the wind. We thought if we ploughed on north from Newtonmore we would be in danger of not completing the challenge.



As we went through Sutherland on Friday morning we had snow, hail, and 3°C temperatures, but it was good to have the wind behind us for once! That day I cycled from Durness to Alness and Peter and I wondered how people survive in Sutherland. The towns are very small and I see from the web that there are only 13,500 people in the whole county and it stretches across to the east coast. Apparently in the west of the county the population density is only one person every square kilometre!



Yes, that's me looking very old and worn out – but it was very tough!

We had a night booked in Lairg and so went back there to sleep and then picked up the route from Alness again on Saturday morning. We made the 60 miles from Alness to Newtonmore in just over 4 hours!



Job done!

Peter was brilliant and kept me and the bike on the road – bless him. He brought his skate board and scooted about on that while he was waiting for me...did you see it in the bike stand on the Pitlochry picture? People have been incredibly generous and I've sent a cheque to the World Mission Council for £3,560. Huge thanks to all who gave!

