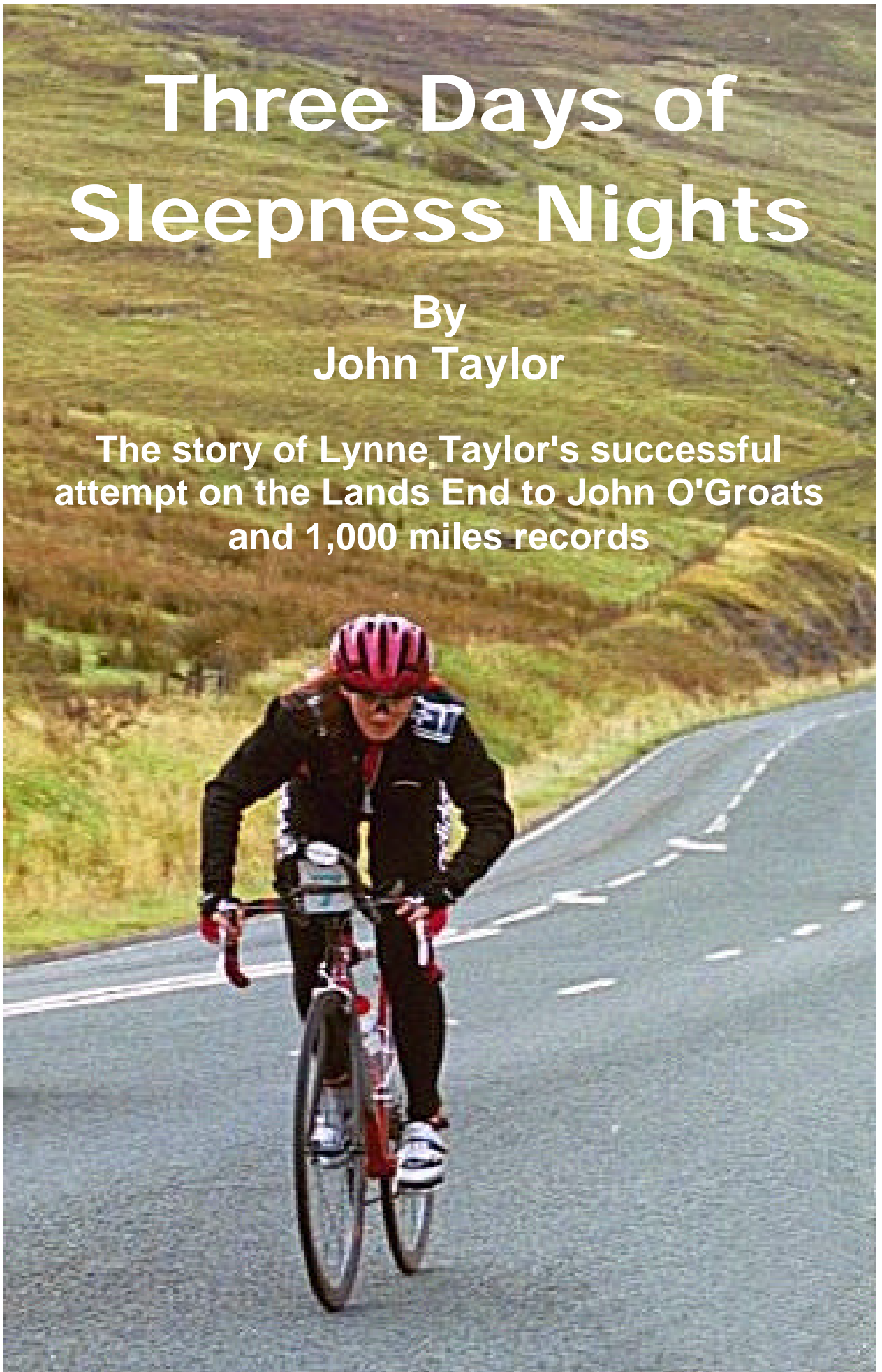


Three Days of Sleepness Nights

By
John Taylor

The story of Lynne Taylor's successful
attempt on the Lands End to John O'Groats
and 1,000 miles records



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An account of Lynne Taylor's successful Lands End to John O'Groats and 1,000 miles Record Attempts, by a proud father



The End to End route

It all started at John O'Groats Hotel last year at the end of Lynne's successful Lands End to John O'Groats (End to End) ride, when the first thing she said to me as we helped her off her bike, was, "I have to go again Dad, haven't I".

Lynne's 2001 years mileage was 17,000 miles of which 1,637 were ridden in time trials and her record ride. She had hoped to get onto the stage at Derby on the RTTC Champions night in the women's Best .All .Rounder Competition, however once again she came just outside the top six. I have to have my say and think that in a question of equality, surely the women should be the same as the men and the top twelve should be taken into account - my own personal view of course and perhaps I'm biased.

After going to many club dinners as guest speaker, on her bike wherever possible, Lynne passed the winter of 2001 into 2002. The start of this year was going pretty much the same as the previous year. On a cold and windy day, Lynne's hilly Elizabethan 21 miles performance putting her on a par with the men. The previous

week she had done a two-up 25 mile with Neil Peart and beat last years time with a '58'. In late April a weeks training camp rides in Majorca in and around the mountains with the lads from the Walsall Roads cycling club - 540 miles in total.

We had asked Jim Turner as far back as November 2001 if he would organise her 2002 attempts and he was happy to agree. A schedule was submitted to the Road Records Association in May to run from 14th June onwards and although it incorporated Christine Roberts 24 hr record of 467.30 miles, Lynne's own End to End record of 2days 5hrs 48mins 21secs, the main aim was to beat Eileen Sheridan's 1,000 mile record of 3 days, 1hr that had stood since 1954. This was achieved in the days when a records like these got 4 or 5 pages in the cycling journals of the day, were shown at cinema's in the Pathe News, and seen on

television, if you were lucky enough to own one then, in the newsreels. Also of course headlines in all the major daily newspapers of the day.

The schedule put in was a modest one based on 'evens' i.e. 20mph up to 12 hours, tapering off to give 450 miles approx for 24 hours and then slowing to 16mph and finally 14mph on the last 200 miles to John O'Groats. The remaining miles for the 1,000 were scheduled at approximately 12 mph. The End to End schedule was designed to knock 19 min off her own record and the 1,000 miles to knock off five and a half hours. At the end of her successful record last year, after enduring 48 hours of rain and not much help from the wind, Lynne had taken over an hour off Pauline Strong's record, and Pauline had taken over 4 hours off Eileen Sheridan's End to End record.

Lynne's training and riding was going well, and her time trial results were an improvement on last year. She eventually finished 5th in the Ladies B.A.R. ensuring her a place on the stage at Derby. Her best 25 was 59.42 ; 50 in 2.00.26 ; 100 in 4.12.47 ; 12 hours was 244 miles and 24 hours was 438 miles. This was one of her best rides and she was pushed hard at the halfway mark by Marina Bloom, who finished with a very creditable 427 mile for her first solo 24 hr ride. Lynne also came 1st in the South Staffs C.A B.A.R. from all the men, and first in her clubs B.A.R. Most of her rides were done locally on not particularly fast courses, but ones she could ride out to wherever possible. Lynne says she cannot see the point in motoring three to four hours just to ride a fast 25 miles.

People have criticised the decision for Lynne to keep attacking the records, year after year, not allowing for recovery, however, in my opinion, so many other things can get in the way and prevent an attempt taking place. I mean, lack of motivation, enthusiasm, finance, family, work commitments, lack lustre performances, joint stiffness, digestive problems, women's ailments (not that I know much about those), and last of all, is the body starting to wear out? In Lynne's case only two of these had cropped up this year. I had been quite concerned about the sickness she had in the 100's, 12hours, and 24hours. Only slight bouts, however something to be aware of when feeding. The other was Achilles tendons and foot discomfort at various times. Lynne has currently 5 pairs of shoes all in various stages of wear - so not another budding Imelda Marcos !!

Lynne never questions our decisions. I say ours, meaning mine, Liz's, her mum, and Jim Turners. The only thing Lynne would ask me while waiting was 'do you think I can still do it? - you know my reply to that, and 'you wouldn't send me without a decent wind would you' to which a lump would appear in my throat and I would say, 'hmm of course not'.

The waiting for the wind to materialise and the right conditions dragged on, and by July lots of changes to peoples lives were happening. Sadly the marvellous team of helpers of 2001 were no longer going to be available it seemed. Andy Wilkinson had changed jobs completely; Paul Histon had also changed his job and was working even longer hours without being able to take a break, and also Lynne McKie who had looked after Lynne so brilliantly on the tandem record 2000, and the solo record on 2001 had also had a job reshuffle demanding more commitment and no spare days. It is not easy for people to be able to drop everything at a days notice to disappear from work for a week as it would have been this time, and we are so grateful for what they did for Lynne previously. Jim Turner had to rethink a new team, and quickly got to work and came up with the following team.

Yvonne Unsworth Jim managed without too much persuasion to get Yvonne from the Southport CC. as Lynne's female support. She had always kept in touch with Lynne and had expressed an interest in helping whenever she could. Yvonne herself had attempted a 24 hr a few years back and she has successfully completed a Paris-Brest-Paris randonee 1200 km, so knew what being tired was all about. Yvonne was to add another dimension to weariness, and she coped with it tremendously well.

Christine Minto our timekeeper and observer, who had been on last years End to End and looked after Lynne to the Midlands, was this year in the following vehicle with me. She timed Lynne off at the start and stayed with us up the country to time the 12hr and 24 hr, but only as an academic feature, as no records were broken. Christine held comp record at 24 hours with 427.86 miles from 1969 -1992, and when I said she would have been ideal to attack the end-to-end, and why hadn't she attempted it, she modestly said that nobody had suggested it to her. Christine finished her duties at Gretna Green, met by husband Frank who took her home. Our sincere thanks to them both for their services to the sport. On a lighter note, Christine and I were given the job of drying Lynne's clothes on the van heater, after going through a fair amount of rain early on. Even though Lynne had got lots of spare dry clothing, one can never be too sure of what lies ahead. We all agreed that the Olbas Oil on the clothes to help her cold treatment made the aroma more bearable.

Colin Baldwin A clubmate of Yvonne's, better known as masseur, soigneur and coach to budding internationals, and often gives up his time helping English squads abroad although he himself is a regular 56 minute 25mile man. He had been with the late Bert Owen on the mixed tandem End to End and had gone right the way up to the top rejuvenating Andy and Lynne's aching muscles. Colin had always said he would love to do another one and was quickly snapped up by Gethin Butler's team in 2001 and obviously did a brilliant job. Jim recruited Colin to be on Lynne's attempt firstly as a masseur and motivator now Paul wasn't available, and to give feeding advice until Neil Peart could join in at Gailey. His other job was as co-driver of the following van with me. His high spirits and comical anecdotes kept us all in good spirits even when the chips were down. (As far as Carlisle at least). Speaking of chips brings me to:

Mike Johnson who had been on the tandem records in 2000, plus Lynne's solo End to End 2001. He had provided vehicles and back up as driver when needed and of course as an observer and helper at various times. This time he provided a Landrover for back up should we have a vehicle problem. We also used it for kit storage and for a helper to sleep in on route. The most important role of course was getting fish and chips for us all (except Lynne) at Kinross. They were the most delicious I've sampled this year, the mouth needs something like that after about 40 hours of junk. Seriously, Mike's knowledge of the route from bottom to top is unsurpassed, but then 30 years as a lorry driver does help. When Mike joined us in the Holmes Chapel area, he was to become our saviour at many junctions and roundabouts that were unmanned by taking by-pass routes to get ahead. He also marshalled the dead turns on the 1,000ml attempt at Thurso and Wick etc.

Pete Swinden of Swinden and John Withers tandem End to End and 1,000 mile fame, Pete was also our observer to Gailey. Again, another selfless observer who has unstintingly given us his time on two previous End to End records and was hoping for a hat trick from Lynne. At one stage it was feared he would be buried forever under mounds of cast off clothing and baggage with just his white hat and glasses visible, but luckily he survived the ordeal.

Tony Shardlow was our timekeeper and observer from Gailey to John O'Groats and 1,000 miles. Tony together with Alan Richards broke many Midland tandem and tandem trike records, plus the RRA tandem 25 in 1977. They were also two of our main supporters on mine and Pat Kenny's tandem trike End to End attempts in the late 70's, so Tony knew what was required of him. Timing the End to End and 1,000 miles is a very accurate and demanding job, especially approaching the 1,000 miles, with markers put out by the Caithness Cycling Club every mile for 10 miles. Tony actually took lots of additional intermediate check points, 30 in all, so that the 1,000 mile point could be pinpointed accurately when the End to End is measured. It hasn't been accurately measured for years, so it affects the remaining distance for the 1,000. although most vehicle trips put it at roughly 840 miles.

Ron Sant A very experienced End to End observer and rider, having completed the Audax gold standard End to End a few years back, inside 80 hours, and having observed and helped on three or four successful ones, including Lynne and Andy's mixed tandem and Gethin's End to End and 1,000ml. Ron knew the ropes very well and joined the team at Gretna having ridden there from Middlewich.

Mike Taylor My son and heir. Actually the 8 old bikes and 1 trike I will pass on to him will all be 4in too small as Mike is 6ft 2in. (This is a note from Liz who is typing this saying as John is now only 5ft 5in, surely this makes the bikes 9in too small!!) Mike has always shown an interest in Lynne's racing and record breaking having been a junior 12 hour rider himself at 16 with the Walsall Roads CC. This was all in the days before university, which one never really recovers from, does one? Mike has always popped up from London where he lives and works, to support Lynne on her record rides and 24 hour races. He felt he would like to do more than just see her flash by and after last years successful End to End he said that he wanted to be a part of this one.

He is quite an experienced organiser himself through his job, and this year successfully entered a full team of walkers in the Caledonian Challenge. This is a 54 mile walk to be completed in 24 hours through three Scottish mountain ranges. It was done in atrocious wet weather (seems to be a Taylor trait) and the full team including his partner Kate completed the trek in under the 24 hours. Mike had arranged all of the logistics for the team and this stood him in good stead for the days ahead, and the fact that he was providing a large jeep helped. His communications skills make him a worthy successor to Paul, keeping the outside world informed and motivating the team.

Neil Peart one of Lynne's friends and training partners, he has helped Lynne the last three seasons, taking her to races wherever possible, or riding out with her. Neil turns out some incredible rides himself and this year was second to Gethin in the Anfield 100 on a fixed wheel on not a good day with a 3hr 59. Neil takes over the feeding from me now and helps Lynne on 12hrs and 24hrs. This year he was helped by Paul Histon for some of the rides. Neil is used to giving Lynne the hourly bottle of Maxim or flavoured PSP Go and Rego, plus a little solid food in between times to reduce the boredom of just liquid. Neil also knows when to reduce the liquid intake to reduce toilet stops when time is getting tight. Being an ex-triathlete he is also a good runner, a very good quality you will agree. This was to be his baptism into End to End helping and he coped very well.

The Jackson's - George and Brenda had provided a very useful motor home for Gethin's 2001 End to End and 1,000 miles, and had offered the same facility for Lynne this year. A very generous gesture, however after waiting all season for a wind to arrive, sadly they had to decline their offer as Brenda, who had been on a waiting list for a major operation, was called in. Our thanks and hopes for a speedy recovery go to her and George. He was out in the Warrington area and gave Lynne a good cheer.

Last but not least we have

Jim and Anne Turner Without these two the attempt could not get off the ground. Anne is a very positive help when events are to be organised. She has tirelessly helped Jim with the Mersey Roads 24hr ride for 13years, and manned the telephone virtually non-stop with the help of her brother Roger, on Gethin's two records last year, even taking the phone to the ladies room on one occasion - now that says devotion to duty. Anne had seen the strain that Gethin's record had put on Jim - he organised and participated in the whole ride. I saw Jim at John O'Groats at 6.00am after Gethin had broken the End to End and Jim, although elated, was looking fraught. He is a bit older than me and to think he'd still got the rest of the 1,000 miles to organise and make decisions, position marshals, etc, all after being up for more than 48 hours of non stop brain work. He had seen Gethin through some bad patches once he'd

reached Scotland and it all adds to the stress factor. He took many weeks to recover from this, so when we asked him in November if he could organise Lynne's attempts, Jim replied that he would be happy to, but could not be out on the road with us.

One must remember the men who organise these record attempts, the likes of John Williams and Jim Turner that have years of experience, but age takes its toll. They are the ones making the decisions, writing the schedules, submitting them to the RRA, making sure that everything is worded correctly, sorting out a team plus reserves, organising hotels at each end, getting enough drivers and observers in all the vehicles, to comply with rules, getting the weather forecast and met-fax printouts every 4 days, finding out about any road closures, road works that affect the route, not easy covering 1,000 miles, making sure the rider is still fit and willing (an easy job in Lynne's case). All these things put them under immense pressure, everyone's lives are put on hold, waiting for the right wind, and did it ever come, not really !! We were trying to find the same weather pattern that Gethin had i.e. 20-25 mph southerly for at least 24 hours. Our wind materialised about Edinburgh, by which time its almost too late.

Malcolm Firth Another very important team job in this day and age, the web site. So useful on the previous attempts and this year run by Malcolm on the ABCC site. It was even more popular this time and reached thousands of people from all over the world. Emails from New Zealand, Australia, Canada, USA, etc. They had all logged on and watched the drama unfold, in fact it nearly made me redundant! For us to get back home the next day and see pictures taken down at Gailey and up in the Ord of Caithness complete with everyone's heart felt messages is all down to the excellent job Malcolm did for us.

The Bike After lifting up Gethin Butler's bike at John O'Groats 2001 and feeling how light it was, I decided it was time Lynne had something lighter and livelier to ride than her Giant Cadex, which had served her well for years, but was a tad heavy at over 21 lbs. I had looked at the 17 lb Scandium and Titanium frames but felt they possibly would not be comfortable enough for 1,000 miles. I asked Orbea whether they had a frame that was as light but with carbon wishbone rear stays for comfort. East Coast Distribution who supply the trade in the UK have on their sales force one Renny Stirling, who is himself an ex RRA record breaker at 25m on tandem. He suggested an off the peg frame made with Columbus alloy tubing and carbon rear stays and forks. This I fitted with a mixture of Ultegra and Dura-ace components plus Dura-ace 16 spoke wheels. This gave the best value weightwise for money, and the total weight including tri bars and route card holder was 19 lbs.

The importance of the wheels play a big part on a route such as the End to End with minimum weight uphill, minimum drag on the flat and long descents, and very little side wind buffeting when on the exposed roads up north. The low weight comes in very useful when climbing 'Shap' or the 'Devils Beef Tub', both very long 45 minute climbs, plus, the steepness of Helmsdale and Berriedale, or 'Birdle' as the locals call it, where the hairpin bends have 1 in 5 sections. The tyres she used for speed and comfort were Continental Grand Prix 700 x 23 with latex tubes. A 53/42 on 12/25 9 speed gearing was just right for the steep climbs and yet was more than enough for the long downhill runs. Lynne's lighting was the tried and tested 6v lead acid Smart battery held in the bottle cage with a lightweight 'clip on' Sigma headlight running a 2.4 w bulb. This combination gave approximately 9 hours of endless light. Used with 2 British Standard Cateye rear Led's mounted on the saddle post and rear wishbone. Her front light was augmented by 2 Cateye front white Led's, with one shining on her route card on the tribars.

28th September 02 - Saturday

After four months of waiting, the wind mostly from the North but quite cold, we even devised a reversed schedule from North to South, with the 1,000 mile running out on the Lizard Peninsular. We never seemed to get the wind we wanted until all of a sudden a BBC forecast came along with four days strung together of southerly winds, not gale force, but constant

15mph with fairly warm dry conditions, with a bit of west in Scotland, at the end of September. It sounded too good to be true, and it very nearly was.

I rang Jim and said 'what do you think?' Pat Kenny wasn't around to ask, so Jim rang Ralph Dadswell, himself a prolific trike End to Ender like Pat, who always kept his eye on the winds. Ralph agreed the forecast and said "Tuesday is as good as you'll get!" All of a sudden 'its on'. Panic, panic, panic - controlled of course.

29th September 02 - Sunday

We hired a van and our son Mike drove up from Kent and helped me load it with bikes that had been ready and polished for three months (you all know what Lynne's like). Batteries were topped up with charge and all systems were go.

30th September 02 - Monday

We all met at our house in Burntwood and set off down to Sennen Cove. Our Mike in his jeep had promised to take Lynne through Gloucester by getting off the M5 south of the city and going through the route with her. It gets rather tricky down by the docks in the old part of the town and Ann Wooldrige had rung the night before to say that their club was having its AGM on the night Lynne would be coming through and there would be no one available to marshal her through. This proved to be a very useful recognisance. Sennen Cove was reached by both vehicles late afternoon, with just enough time for Lynne to have a spin down to Lands End to stretch her legs after sitting in the car all day. The hotel Jim had booked for us is our usual one 'Old Manor House Hotel' It's a very friendly place and Peter, the owner, now does evening meals so it saves having to go out to eat. The hotel had undergone a few changes with some rooms now being en-suite. Stopping there is our first good omen, as there have been five successful records from staying there in three years. Could this bring about another two or more?

I am not really a superstitious person, nowhere near as bad as Gethin. When he plans a date or an attempt, he goes by numbers, as he relates in his brilliant write up of his successful End to End and 1,000, but then he is a mathematician. I digress, so if anyone out there is looking for a good place to stay at Sennen I can thoroughly recommend it. When Peter the landlord asked us what time we wanted breakfast and we replied 4 for 4.30 am he didn't bat an eyelid. After getting the two vehicles set up ready for the morning with RRA stickers on front and rear we settled down to a good meal. We have a laugh at one or two of Colin's exploits when he was in the Police Force, chasing the 'baddies', and then we retired to bed.

1st October 02 - Tuesday

Morning came all too soon, with Lynne looking a little more relaxed this time and she admitted to having had at least two hours sleep. She had also heard a definite 'two taps' on the door of her room. Our friendly Cornish ghost was around again. After a light breakfast, difficult to appreciate at 5am, it was out into the cold black misty gloom, with a fog horn sounding just out to sea, like a stricken dinosaur. Thick mists down to Lands End Hotel made the bends difficult to negotiate.

Lynne went on ahead hoping the hotel would be open for the first of her many comfort stops. She had had a few colds at the end of the season, not suprising really, working in the shop, and had also had as I mentioned, one or two tricky moments in races with sickness and 'the runs'. She seemed quite perky and 'up for it' as they say. Roy and Iris with the two white Labradors were there once again to wish us all a safe journey, especially Lynne, another good omen in place. The two dogs waiting silently and patiently and Lynne likes these two dogs, unlike the ones in the Helms cartoon. Why aren't all dogs like these. Thanks to Iris and Roy; people don't realise just how important a part they play in these record attempts, just by being there. It means so much to Lynne and the rest of us.

It was a very eerie place to be at the southern most tip of England in almost pitch dark with a swirling mist and just one light on at the hotel entrance. We have to illuminate large boulders with torches so that Lynne didn't come to grief in the car park trying to get out. A small fishing boat chugged away from the cliffs below us into the inky misty blackness. Rather than me I thought. Not much wind at the moment but it's early yet. Everything is in place, all the good lucks and goodbyes have been made. Christine counting her down now, just as her husband Frank had done last year. This was it - the waiting was over.

Day 1 - 1st October 02 - Tuesday



6am South Door - Lands End Hotel and Lynne's away through the obstacle course of a car park thick with mist. We scrambled into the vehicles a bit like a Le Mans start, and got onto the road to make sure she hadn't come to grief on the bends. The road through a village called Drift, just past Sennen had had its surface scarified leaving raised manhole covers and ramps for about two miles which gave us concern as to whether she would get through unscathed. The bends were very tricky in the gloom and was rather scary with overhanging trees forming a tunnel, but she tackled it with ease, so glad to be on her way at last after waiting all these months.

6.30am Penzance - 10 miles - with commuting traffic just getting on the move now. Between Hayle and Redruth we saw Elaine Hancock, another very positive cheery supporter, and I am sure she won't mind me saying, another good omen. She had been present on all the records and big occasions whenever she can,

i.e Anfield 100, Mersey 24. She is one of Lynne's and Gethin's biggest supporters, keeping up the tradition her late husband Syd started 50 years previously.

7.07 am Redruth By-Pass - 22 miles - weather is damp and misty, its almost daylight but not very bright. The traffic is getting heavier now, where on earth are they all going to at this time of day? Pauline appears in the layby on the bypass, after having to get up at an ungodly hour just to see Lynne. She said she was 'spooked' by a black jeep driving up very close to her car so she locked the doors and windows. In the poor light and swirling mist these big unshaven fellows got out and started clapping and jumping up and down, and then she realised it was our Mike and the team. What a relief, and thanks for the hug, its goes a long, long way. That's another good omen in place.

8.35 am Bodmin By-pass - 52 miles - Just inside evens and looking quite comfortable, only 950 miles to go. Traffic very heavy with cars swooping in on the sliproads. We are having to keep our eye on Lynne, protecting her at all of these danger spots. She knows the road very well and keeps glancing to the left, just in case a car slips in. She is drinking 20% PSP Blackcurrant, one 750 ml bottle per hour.

9.48 am Launceston By pass - 77 miles - Lynne is just 3 minutes up on schedule now. The sun just breaking through patchy mist pockets. Pete Swinden is seen with a dry white handkerchief held aloft for wind direction. There is no movement, it just hangs vertically, I assume by the way that it is a 'dry' hanky! I think later on he cheers Lynne up by moving his hand so that it flutters in the right direction. Lynne has had a muesli bar and a banana.

10.36 am - Okehampton By Pass - 92 miles - After some very long stiff climbs, Lynne stops to change into dry clothes as the four and a half hours of mist had soaked into the fibres. We saw Chris Baretto here. Still no wind and as she starts off again she looks at me anxiously. She was doing very well, just on evens, but without a wind at all she knew she would reach the Midlands well down on schedule. At least there was one saving grace, it wasn't raining was it? Lump back in the throat, hide back in the van. Lynne has hot peppermint tea.

10.55 am 100 miles - Grey skies, no wind and going steady. The A30 is becoming

increasingly monotonous now and Lynne is looking forward to slightly narrower and quieter road after Exeter has been reached.

11.51 am Just south of Exeter 117 miles - Lynne is just on schedule here with a slight drizzle making the roads greasy. We see our first marshal who directs us over the first set of busy lights into the town. Lynne manages to recognise most of the roundabouts and turns instinctively at one or two places from memory. I don't recall seeing any other marshals, but then we were never very often behind, and we are having a job to play 'catch up' due to the very heavy traffic. It seems that, other than leaving Lands End at midnight, you will never get a decent run at these towns to miss almost total gridlock in some cities, i.e. Bristol later on. She just manages to see the sign for Broadclyst and Cullompton on the far side of a roundabout, but we miss it and make a bit of a messy turn to get back on course. Quite often in these towns there are places written on the schedule that bear no significance to the route, such as 'Black Boy' roundabout' in Exeter. There is nothing to say where it is, so unless you are a local you are not going to recognise it, and is it politically correct? On now and Lynne reaches

12.36 pm Cullompton 132 miles - Still on schedule and still no wind, but the drizzle has cleared now. The quiet back roads that Lynne had hoped for were busier than last year and the surfaces have deteriorated immensely all the way to Wellington, where the drizzle was back with a vengeance.

1.42 pm Taunton 151 miles - Very heavy dinner time traffic worse than last year. She lost time here not being able to weave in and out of traffic, and the rain is getting heavier. She is now 8 min down on schedule but still quite happy.



2.17 pm Bridgewater 160 miles - Torrential rain now and Lynne has to stop to put on waterproof clothing. She has an upset stomach and took some Rennie's. All along the Bridgewater Flats the rain was relentless with spray from huge lorries and surface water. We saw Shelagh Hargreaves here and she looked apprehensive. Lynne has had two or three stops for dry clothing to try and remain comfortable. She pushes on regardless undeterred by it all, to reach

3.43 pm Churchill Traffic Lights 180 miles - She is now over 40 min down on 20mph. The road gets very lumpy now on the way into Bristol with some long steep winding climbs. Again all the way up from the south, we were told the warm weather and the wind were just ahead of us up the road, very much the same as last year, Jim was questioned 'how far up the road?' Our Mike rang Liz at the shop to find out what it was like there and she said 'its fine and sunny with a light breeze'. I was driving the following van at this point and I commented to Christine 'this is exactly the same as last year'. I was starting to feel very guilty now, sitting in a nice warm van watching the spray coming up from Lynne's back wheel. She had a spare race bike specially kitted out with full mudguards in the van but when do you make the decision to get her on it? How long was this band of rain going to last?

Lynne was approaching Bristol now with a long descent to the Bedminster Down Road. The same diversion up the gorge still applied as from last year, with Lynne having to go up the steep climb to the Clifton Suspension Bridge, so high, perched above the steep drop. We were marshalled very well here through Bristol by Geoff Lonsdale's team who made every effort to keep Lynne and us on the right road - not easy in a permanent rush hour. Our sincere thanks to each and every one of them. Bridget and Ian Boon were out in strategic places and

after last year's ride they must have thought we always travel under a continuous band of rain. Lynne must have been cheered up no end seeing all these familiar faces on such a wet day. I know that we were in the van, but apart from the wet, things were going fine here, marshals on all the turns, Westbury Road, Henleaze Road, right the way through, so not much time lost and then back onto the A38.

5.04 pm - Filton - 199 miles - 1 hr and 5 min down on schedule. You would think that once we're back out on the main road things would be fine, but all of a sudden we ran into queues of traffic for two or three miles, leading up towards the M5 interchange. What a nightmare, with heavy rain, Lynne couldn't risk weaving in and out so there was nowhere to go but sit in the traffic. Red traffic light after red traffic light, even around the islands. She never seemed to get a green sequence. I would estimate another loss of 12 min over this section, very wet and getting despondent, she reached beyond the 12 hour point at:

6.13 pm Cambridge - 218 miles. 1hr 15mins down on schedule. One of Liz's cousins, Antonia came across the bridge from Cardiff to see Lynne north of Bristol. She waited over two hours in the afternoon mist and rain, and decided Lynne must have had a big problem to be that far down and went back to Cardiff. She missed her by less than ten minutes, and afterwards Antonia said that it had made her realise just what cyclists in general have to put up with, as she sat in her car in a lay-by, heavy rain, grey skies, lorries thundering past obliterating everything with spray and shaking the car, let alone Lynne who had had to put up with it for two and a half days last year, and possibly again this year ! Along this stretch Lynne was combating sickness with peppermint tea and dry toast, and she had a problem with 'the runs' which never normally affect her once she is riding, so something wasn't quite right. She hadn't really eaten a great amount and was still drinking her regular carbo drink every hour, and a little buttie in between. Maybe it was the banana from earlier. I know that on the 12hr and 24hr this year each time she tried fruit she was sick. This is what I meant about doing rides sooner rather than later, as the body alters from year to year and the digestive system starts to reject foods that are normally alright. Seven minutes were lost on this stretch.

6.43 pm - Gloucester - 227 miles - Lynne managed to negotiate all of Gloucester without any problems. The 'recce' on the trip down had proved invaluable to her. It was still daylight, but approaching dusk. The rain was now down to a drizzle and with Gloucester behind her, she settled down to a steady pace, and we saw Lynn and Steve Hudson along here, old friends of ours originally from the Rugeley area. Tewksbury was negotiated, all the rush hour traffic having gone. Lynne said later that she had noticed the same authentic gypsy horse drawn caravan that she had seen last year at the same location. Another good omen was in place, although she missed her Aunts, Donney and Rosie, this year as Donney was on holiday in California and was most upset she would miss her. I know that they were both praying and wishing her success. Rosie's husband, Inky was again going to get on a train and see her somewhere up North like last year.

Six miles north of Tewkesbury the road goes under the M50 so we decided it was a good place to stop for shelter. Lynne had a 23 minute break for a leg and back massage. I checked the bike over and fitted full night lights here, and lubed the transmission now it had stopped raining. Lynne had all dry clothing on now and after a 5 min catnap, she was cheerful and positive and said the main aim was the 1,000 miles of which there were approximately 750 to go. Off she went into a dark murky night towards Worcester. My sister Margaret and husband Les had waited nearly three hours at the Upton-on-Severn crossroads, and decided she must have packed being this far down. They went home only to find they had missed her by minutes.

8.49 pm Worcester - 257 miles Lynne said that she saw Adrian Pudsey and the gang around here. I was so busy trying to keep up and not get lost this year, I didn't notice anyone at all. She is now 1hr 40m down on schedule, having lost more time due to the night stop.

The road through Worcester is now slightly simpler than last year as you don't have to go down by the river and back up anymore. Instead you go through the town and turn right into 'The Tything' from the opposite direction towards Kidderminster.

9.35 pm Kidderminster - 269 miles 1hr 53mins down. From here onwards Lynne started to see people she knew and this really spurred her on, also on roads she knew quite well. Lynne took some hot chocolate here. We saw Jill and Reg Bromley with Sue and Kev Payton and their children, along with lots of other familiar faces. Nev Billington was at The Mitre Oak Pub to see us. No stop here this year, except for me to pick up Tony Shardlow, who was to observe in the feed car when Pete Swinden got out at Gailey. Tony eventually would take over the timekeeping duties at Gretna Green from Christine. I do hope we get there and that no more obstacles are put in the way. We saw Chris Nicholls from the 'Lizzie's' along here with Dean Peach, one of Lynne's clubmates from the Walsall Roads.

10.34pm Wolverhampton - 286 miles 2 hrs down on schedule, Lynne knows the town reasonably well but for some reason missed the Waterloo Road turning, and instead went further on along the ring road. The signs for Stafford and The North had lured us that way. We didn't see any marshals in Wolverhampton but then I don't think I would like to stand around, even in two's, at that time of night. I hear Gethin did the same detour on his record last year. It's approximately 0.2 of a mile longer. Out beyond Wolverhampton there were crowds along here on the A449. All the lads from the Walsall Roads CC including John Blower, Johnny Robins who never missed an End to End, Malcolm Hunt etc, etc. All her friends from other clubs were there, including Brian Westwood, a regular supporter from 'The Woolly Wheelers'.



On now to Gailey Island, roads that Lynne races on regularly with all these clubmen. A big smile and 'thumbs up' from Lynne, although inwardly she would be holding back the tears, knowing Lynne. There were crowds along here, Phil and Mari Guy, Pat and Hazel Kenny, all my old clubmates, Derek, Tony, Bob, Phil St John. All these people come out to see Lynne when she rides a big event. How good people are to us. Dave Merriman from the shop, who is covering for our absence with Liz. Rob Eperjesi, another training partner of Lynne, and family friend. Claire Ashton who rode with Lynne in the 24 hr this year took a photo

here and put it onto the web site. The first photo of this ride, and a good one of Lynne with her thumb up. Lots of faces from the past, Charley Larkin, looking well, Graham Dayman, helpers from years gone by. Andy Fleming who came out on his bike, Richard Dickenson, Paul Histon, Sue and Geoff Bowler, from the South Pennine.

At the layby there were some poor lorry drivers trying to get their heads down. No chance with the crowds there to cheer Lynne on. Liz was here having bought out Neil Peart to help in the feed car, and Pam who has known Lynne since she was born. Pam and Neil had arrived at our house and were immediately put to work by Liz. Pam on filling numerous flasks with boiling water, and Neil stirring the saucepans full of rice pudding ready for flasks. Our Mike had phoned Liz when Lynne had been sick and said he wanted to revert back to some of the old ways of feeding hence the rice pudding. Liz had to go around the neighbours to cadge tins to make sure there was enough and was kept busy answering the telephone with friends enquiring. Pete Swinden left us here, another good job well done. Further down the road we saw John Bevan. He had missed Lynne last year having to keep the east coast main line

running from his signal box at Lichfield. By the time we caught Lynne up she was just entering:

11.20pm Stafford - 303 miles. The crowds on route must have made a difference as she has picked up nearly 10mins along here to be only 1hr 50min down now. More club folk between here and Newcastle, Les Lowe, Ian Hill, Hugh Canning, Margaret and Jim Hopper, John and Margaret Reid, Sean McDonald, all regulars when there is an End to End on, and there has certainly been some activity in the last three years. Our thanks to them all once again. We saw Paul Histon again looking very concerned. We stopped and had a quick chat and a hug. I think he was worried about us pushing Lynne into another real struggle, with the weather forecast towards the end not being very good. I can understand his deep feeling as he had been the only 120% motivator last year when things looked bad at the 24 hr point and beyond. When we were going through the motions of helping. Paul, Lynne McKie and Andy kept Lynne so positive and happy, but Paul was our motivator, convincing us that it could be done! We were to see Paul, and Andy on his motorbike, popping up to see how things were going. It was well into the wee small hours that they would have gone home. The roads are dry now, a few patches of mist here and there and a gentle tailwind for a change, Lynne could do with some help along here. People don't realise it but the road gradually climbs from Stone for about 15 miles and becomes quite steep in parts out towards Kidsgrove etc.

Day 2 - 2nd October 02

12.05 am Newcastle under Lyme - 318 miles Lynne has pulled back another 8 minutes here. We saw Rob Waghorn along this road from the Congleton CC, along with Karl Austin and his mum Joyce. Lynne sees them both out regularly at all the longer distance events. Graham and Jane Whalley also from Congleton CC were there. George and Bev Longstaff out to see her through. I bet George hasn't missed many End to Ends. Our thanks to all of them through Holmes Chapel. A fairly mild night and onto

1.48 am Knutsford - 341 miles. After a short stop for dry clothes, Lynne is now 1hr 58mins down on schedule. I think at this point, as was evident earlier on, Lynne is consciously making every effort to keep comfortable with dry clothes, so as not to have too many chaffed or raw patches later on for the 1,000 miles, which was really now the main thing on her mind, although a bit off her End to End would be a bonus. She doesn't bother with a computer, preferring to rely on what we tell her (or don't always tell her as the case may be if it's looking grim). She obviously knew at this point she would barely scrape 400 miles for the 24 hrs, leaving a lot to do later on.

She was now having one or two small bouts of sickness, basically, a quick reaction to something she had just eaten. She could be seen 'heaving' while still travelling at evens (20 mph) on the flat. One must remember that from the start she had maintained 20mph for the first 150 miles. The only time the average speed goes down over the journey is when she stops, so when you follow Lynne there are very rarely any slow patches except up anything steeper than a 1 in 7 so basically she is either stopped or doing 18-20 mph, all the way. Ruth, Bob and Jonathan Williams who had been such a help on previous records were out here to see us over the A556 and on towards Warrington. The sky was becoming lighter now, not from daylight but from the permanent lights from the motorways and conurbations we were travelling through for the next three hours. The Warrington area looks all the same to me. I've tried to remember all the familiar faces and where I saw them. We saw the Williams again on another tricky junction at Warrington along with Johny Helms and his wife. (John sent Lynne a cartoon - very apt, of a man going out to water his garden and his wife saying 'I shouldn't bother with that, Lynne Taylor's going on another record attempt'). Thanks John. No menacing dogs though - I do like the dogs.

George Jackson was out to give Lynne a shout. No doubt Brenda was pleased to hear Lynne was still going. Mike Johnson started to appear regularly along here. From Holmes Chapel he had taken by-pass routes to see Lynne through anywhere that was unmarshalled. Four or five times I came to places and started to get concerned about the route and there was Mike. Perfect timing. Mike had lots of space in his Landrover that proved very useful for spare kit and sleeping on the move for any helpers that needed it. As I said before, his knowledge of the roads is unsurpassed, plus where to pick up gastronomic delights i.e. double bacon butties at Penrith, fish and chips at Kinross, all add to his repertoire. We saw Carol and John Pardoe two or three times here. Warrington was negotiated without any problems due to everyone's help and on now to Winwick Church where Tom Greep again saw us round the right turn towards Wigan. Thanks Tom.

There was another good crowd out here, Eileen and Dave Brabbin, Joan Kershaw and family. We had a quick chat through the van window. I am sure Christine would have loved a long chin-wag and so would I. Joan was my heroine in the 60's and 70's when I was riding my first long distance events, as she beat most of the male riders of the day. Her smooth style makes me think how things might have been if she had tackled the End to End. I must not keep looking back, though it does make you wonder. Around this area and onwards we spied the Gethin Butler limousine. Gillian and Gethin were keeping Lynne's spirits up immensely, again

his local knowledge of the roads, allowing him to by-pass the rider and see her through, almost to Lancaster.

4.25 am Preston 382 miles - 2 hrs 22m down on schedule, Lynne is still pushing on, turning right at the Crest Hotel. Before Gethin left us he passed us a three page met office forecast for the rest of the ride which was actually 'smack on' correct. The only problem was we had almost come to disbelieve weather forecasts, after last year, and so far on this ride we hadn't had the warmth and winds down on the charts, with heavy rain at 200 miles we were pessimistic about the rest of the journey. We saw Jack Stokes and Roy Freeman here.

24 HOURS 6 am Just south of Carnforth 410 miles. Lynne was now still 10 miles below her 2001 distance at this point. She takes a short break approx 45 min to take off night clothing and lights at Milnthorpe.

6.45 am Approx Just south of Kendal 416 miles - 2hrs 30 min down. Lynne stopped in a lay-by with a lovely idyllic setting of a shallow beck deep down to the left with the mist just hovering above. But only we could appreciate its beauty. Lynne was being topped up and prepared for the long hard climb of Shap. At least this year she will be able to see the views whereas last year it was a gruesome misty wet grovel. She eventually reaches the summit after nearly 10 miles of climbing and still looks very cheerful. Saw Wilco's cousin Mike along this stretch. Lynne had to stop because her shoes were so uncomfortable. She had got them really wet at Bristol and we had taken out the insoles to dry them out, and unknowingly they had been put in the wrong way round making her socks uncomfortable. These were her most comfortable shoes and after messing around with various pairs, Colin was heard to say 'come on Lynne, its not a fashion show'. We all had a laugh.



8.34 am Shap Fell Summit - 436 miles The schedule shows she should have been here by 5.11am so technically she is 3hrs 23 down, but there is an hours rest built into the ride at 450 miles and everybody is hoping she will be strong enough not to take the rest. Here we see two more stalwarts from the days when Ed Green used to be on Shap, Lucinda and Len Leavesley who've been out on nearly all the attempts including Pat Kenny's and mine years ago. Many thanks. After a good run down through Shap village reaching speeds of up to 40 mph, Lynne reaches Penrith and takes the Old London

Road, and after a couple of mini islands takes a road that climbs severely, even ferociously, upwards. It is dead straight, with rows of houses and cars parked either side, and my thoughts were I hope she doesn't get stopped by a bus coming down, it was that steep, approx 1 in 6 (approx 17%) for about a mile.

She climbed it mechanically, the road at the top went left and painfully climbed some more and then plummeted down to join the A6, where she went right. Afterwards I asked her 'Were you meant to go up there', and she replied that she suddenly recognised it as a road Andy had used on the tandem and for some reason assumed that it was the correct route! When I said I thought it was a hell of a climb, Lynne said 'yes, it did feel a bit steep'.

9.50 am Stoney Beck island North of Penrith 454 miles - Lynne has averaged 16.3 mph to here. Mike Westmoreland, (now that's a perfect Lake District name isn't it?) had reported in to say Lynne had stopped to put on sunglasses and suntan crème. Not much wind but getting warmer. That girl will do anything to top up her tan! We noticed as we came off Shap Fell that there were some huge chimneys at a concrete works ahead on the right and the wind was just

lifting the smoke from them in our direction. We could have done with Pete Swinden's handkerchief, instead of the modern day tissues, or a good sniff people, in this party. The road now to Carlisle runs on a plateau and is a bit boring after seeing the views from Shap. After foregoing her hours break, Lynne now reaches the station at

10.42 am Carlisle 471 miles - 2 hrs 20 min down. The traffic is not as heavy this year as last year when she went through at dinnertime, so she didn't lose much time, recognising most of the route with ease. (I knew there was another good reason for attacking the record year after year!) Eileen Sheridan, the current 1,000 mile record holder sends Lynne a message of encouragement here, to which Lynne puts her 'thumbs up' That will give her something to think about along this next bit of flat dual carriageway, that is a continuation of the M6 and runs up to Gretna Green. The traffic is horrendous along here and the noise of the lorries tyres on the tarmac and concrete could get to you at this stage, after 30 hours. However the turning off for Gretna isn't too far away now, and I think Lynne has spotted what looks like the seaside to the left; that makes a change.

11.10 am Just North of Gretna - 418 miles Now 2hrs 10m down on schedule but Lynne has picked up quite a lot of speed along here. The van pulls into the services at Gretna and we say goodbye to Christine. So many thanks to her and Frank. We take on Tony Shardlow in our van here to timekeep and observe, and Ron Sant goes into the support car as observer. This road runs parallel to the M74 and is a bit of a graveyard, with just the odd farm buildings on it. It's hard to believe that a few years ago it was one of the main roads serving Edinburgh and Glasgow. All along here are relics of closed derelict garages and businesses that once thrived on passing traffic. Lynne takes a sponge from a wellwisher at Lockerbie.

12.35 pm Johnstone Bridge - 503 miles Lynne is halfway for the 1,000 miles and 340 miles to go for the End to End. Approximately thirty and a half hours to here and she has reduced her deficit to 2hr 5mins. Its still sunny with a bit of a tailwind, freshening all the while. The road swings off now to Moffat a picturesque town with lovely buildings, but all the rider wants to do now is get the gruesome climb of the 'Devils Beeftub' out of the way. The lush green meadows around Moffat soon give way to coarse moorland, tors, mountainsides and fells. The road can be seen way up high in the distance going round a ridge to the right.

It climbs for about 8 miles twisting and turning, unlike Shap except for its severity. Off to the right the ground drops away into a huge deep chasm, known as the Beef-tub. The climb is so severe in places the following vehicles have to stop and pull in at every available passing place and layby for the rider to get ahead and so as not to inconvenience any other traffic. Cars coming down seem to go that fast they appear to be almost airborne, cutting the bends and risking life and limb. Oh dear, I'm sounding old again. Lynne battles on with the help from the tailwind. This climb seems to go on forever but eventually she reaches the top.

1.40 pm Beeftub Summit - 517 miles Only 2hr 15mins down now. Lynne stops here for a short comfort break. She looks at me and says 'I'm sure someone's put more air in my tyres without telling me' As if we would! From here there is approx 36 miles of gentle downhill to Penicuik. Halfway down the descent at Broughton, Lynne has cut her losses to just 2hrs 2mins down. With lots of breathtaking views of the Tweed Valley on our right, the road winds on to:

3.39 pm Penicuik - 553 miles The strengthening tail wind has helped Lynne to be just 1 hr 49 min down now. This is getting exciting, but with Edinburgh looming on a Wednesday tea time, anything could happen. There's a long way to go yet, but at least it's dry and fairly mild. Don't forget its October and so not exactly summer temperatures. Rush hour traffic is building up at the roundabouts. Lynne manages to remember a lot of the route, Carol Dietman and Jane were out at crucial junctions as in the previous years and thanks to them again. Lynne gave them a bit of a worry, going almost out of Edinburgh when she disappeared up a cul-de-

sac, and re-appeared a few minutes later. She had had a comfort stop away from the main road traffic. She remembered the way so well she beat Carol and Jane to the 'Drum-Brae' turning onto the A90. They had been delayed by almost gridlock jams and they emerged to see her rapidly disappearing towards the Forth Road Bridge - mission accomplished.



4.46 pm Forth Road Bridge - 572.8 miles now only 1 hr 39 down. Lynne's Uncle 'Inky' Stephen Moss had once again come up on the train from Birmingham. He had missed her at Carlisle, saw her at Lockerbie, and then got into a taxi to the Forth Road Bridge to see her again. How's that for determination. Lynne was amazed to see him there, wondering how he had done it. Thanks Inky. Knowing him, he'll be back at work in Birmingham for 8.30 tomorrow morning. Again, the huge bridge with a lone cyclist going over what looks like an ocean was crossed - not for the faint-hearted !.

When she emerged from the bridge she stopped to put some warmer clothes on as the coastal winds were chilling her down. Off left now to Cowdenbeath where Mike Johnson and I had gone on ahead and come across a diversion because a bridge over a railway line was collapsing. With through access to pedestrians only we stopped and marshalled Lynne over the bridge footpath. We then took a long detour by car. This must have saved her about 10 min delay. Kinross and Glenfarg were reached and down comes the rain again, quite heavy and the sky is a muddy colour. Time to fit the proper lights. Lynne has a short break here but says she's looking forward to getting to Perth now.

7.21 pm Perth - 607 miles 1 hr 47 down after her short break. Lynne is eating and drinking well now with no signs of sickness - thank God. Again Mike Johnson and I took advantage of her stopping earlier and went on ahead to checkout Perth, as last year in the dark I had got completely lost looking for road names, and didn't want a repeat of that. It was lucky we did because the left turn into Glenearn Road was dug up with 4 way temporary lights taking about 7 min to get through. We did a quick 'recce' of the town, and worked our way back just in time to marshal Lynne through a pedestrian ropeway with mounds of mud and stones everywhere. Phew that was lucky. She went slightly wrong at one more roundabout but managed to get through Perth without any further 'hold-ups', and we caught up with the following van just as she went onto the A9 into the second dark night northward to:

8.20 pm Dunkeld - 622 miles Now 1 hr 42 down she's pulled back more time with a rising tailwind, she's averaging 20mph along here. Lets hope this drizzle doesn't get any worse. 'sleep deprivation' is now the main worry, as Lynne struggles to see the surface of the road. The rain making the surface black and it then absorbs the light instead of reflecting it. This makes her stare even harder to spot ridges and potholes and of course her eyelids get droopy and heavy. I also think the headlights of the following vehicle and the approaching ones, caused her to see the road as blood red every now and then - probably the blood vessels behind the retina. This was just one of her hallucinations on the long dark 150 mile stretch through the Highlands. Alan Richards had phoned through from France to Tony's mobile each day for updates and was now getting concerned as to would she do it knowing how she had battled last year. We told him the wind was picking up and that cheered him up.

.9.40 pm North of Blair Atholl - 640 miles - Drizzle getting heavier now, this is such a boring road in the dark. The only good thing is that you can't see the hills winding away high in the distance. The height and severity of the climbs is only given away when you see 10ft high

snow markers along the edges of the road so that the snowploughs can get their bearings after a bad storm. At 650 miles Lynne has a short stop to rest her backside. She accused us again of putting more air in her tyres at the last stop. Neil and I got the blame but it was all in the imagination. We hadn't touched them since Lands End. They had actually lost pressure slightly as latex tubes always do after about 30 hours.

11.20pm Drumochter Summit - 660 miles - Back to 2 hrs down now. Lynne had to stop for a new battery as earlier on I had upped the bulb to a 5 watt to give her a better light and this had expired the battery much quicker than a 2.4 watt. I now dropped the bulb down to a 2.4 again as with a third night to come I couldn't afford to run out of batteries. She was very wet and getting cold along here, don't forget it's the Highlands in October and there could be a heavy frost by dawn. Lets hope not. The wind wasn't there any more and she was looking very apprehensive although still averaging 16 to 18 mph. She wanted to rest her eyelids but didn't want to lose any more time. We told her she only had 180 miles to go to John O'Groats and that most of the climbs were done - one learns to be very economic with the truth on these missions, 'most' meaning 51 %. I am sure we would all have made very good politicians at this time. After the drop down off Drumochter and nearing the Kingussie By-pass Lynne has pulled back a few minutes.

Day 3 - 3rd October 2002

12.17 am Kingussie - 674 miles On now towards Aviemore where 10 days later after this ride the A9 was blocked by a snowfall. The length of these climbs shows up when you travel back down this road in daylight in the car and you realise you've been dropping downhill for 30 min or more at 70 mph and you still haven't reached the bottom. It is along here, where there are rows of spruce trees at the edge of the road and great tracts of bracken moving about in the night air, that Lynne started seeing things. The ferns or bracken were all sorts of lovely warm colours and shapes and the trees seemed to be alive, like animated nursery rhyme characters. The black lay-bys now appeared like purple velvet. I did feel a mild form of this myself so know what Lynne was experiencing and describing. At one stage she saw rows of penguins all standing looking at her cycling past!!

I forgot to mention that as we were climbing Drumochter earlier on at about 11.00 pm we heard a shipping forecast for offshore and inshore waters, and virtually all of them for Northern England, Northwest Scotland and North East Scotland were absolutely perfect for us. Most of them gave southerly winds, dry and warm, and at the top where we were going, they backed westerly. I know these forecasts are for coastal waters, but from Inverness onwards we are only about 2 miles from the coast at anytime. It gave us a terrific boost knowing that at last Lynne was going to pick up a wind soon. Tony was looking to see if Lynne could get the two records now! One must remember that at this point with approximately 160 miles to go and still lots of hard climbs to come, Lynne was still 2 hrs down on a schedule, that only allows for a 17 minute beating of her own End to End record. Along here, our Mike is making sure members of the team are taking turns for a sleep to be OK for the 1,000 miles. With Aviemore behind us Lynne's next goal was

2.00 am Approx - Slochd Summit - 702 miles Approx 1 hr 40 down. Lynne climbed well here knowing it was the last of the long drags - nine miles in all, before the long drop down towards Inverness. Lynne appears to hesitate on the pedals every now and then. At first I thought it was her gears playing up or a stiff chain link. When I asked her about it afterwards she said she was easing back for the traffic lights on red, and then suddenly realising there weren't any. She was hallucinating, probably reliving the journey through all the traffic on the first day, now which day was that? She also remembers taking a bottle from Pete Swinden here, but he got out at Gailey didn't he? It was a very cold descent with clear skies and millions of stars were visible with such limited light pollution. At least it was dry so Lynne could see the road ahead. After an hour of downhill the glow of the lights at Inverness lured her onwards, until we look down onto the town with its lights twinkling in the waters of the Beaully Firth. We bypass onto

3.25 am The Kessock Bridge - 720 miles 1 hr 39 min down she was sleepy, tired and cold by this point but happy to have got so far. She has only gained a minute on this long section of downhill, but Lynne knows she will soon see the sign for John O'Groats 120 miles. The road was very quiet now and its along here we see Roger Sewell of the North Roads CC (Inverness section?) Lynne says hello to him, she knows who he is but the name keeps coming out wrong - again tiredness takes its toll.

On reflection afterwards, Lynne said 'I felt terrible, I knew it was Roger, but I kept saying George'. I said he was probably glad you could still speak at this stage. The feeding team were doing a marvellous job along here, giving her lots of encouragement and information about the wind and how good the coming day was going to be. Over the Cromarty Firth now to the roundabout on the mainland where as she turns right she picks up a good tailwind to help her over this last stretch. At this point she has gained another 5 min back on schedule. By the next checkpoint she has gained another 18 min.

5.31 am Tain Bypass - 752 miles only 1 hr 17 min down and day has now dawned. The oil rigs out on the horizon to the right clearly visible - what a godsend to be going along here in the dry after last years wet passage up the coast. Over the Dornoch Firth now, the last stretch of water to be crossed, out onto

6.30 am - Golspie 770 miles - Another 15 min gained here, to be only 1 hr 3 min down. This is hold your breath time, for us anyway. Can she do it ? She's got much better conditions now than last year, its dry, not too cold and she has a tailwind and a beautiful dawn to look at over on the right out to sea. The bright sun giving an ermine lining to a long thin cloud, the only cloud in the sky. Lynne points to the sun now and puts her thumb up, great, she's feeling good. Everybody is in good spirits now but there are still three major climbs yet. On now past the cottage where Pat and I climbed off in 1977. We were attacking Crimes and Arnold's Tandem Trike record that had stood since 1954 at 2 days 4 hours. It was done the day after Eileen Sheridan's End to End and 1,000ml ride. What records and what a wonderful era in which to be a club cyclist. Pat and I had over 80 miles to do and less than four hours to do it in against a strong north easterly wind, so this bit of coastline is etched forever in my memory. To see Lynne riding this stretch of road so strongly more than compensates for that. Only 70 miles to go now and there's a real urgency in her riding. She is really fighting back against the clock. She now reaches

7.41 am Helmsdale YHA - 787 miles less than 1 hr down now. Tony says he's never seen a woman climb hills like that before. I thought she had already been told it was touch and go as to whether she would break the End to End, when she kept saying the 1,000mile was the important record and the End to End would be a bonus, but apparently when Neil told her on Helmsdale Lynne looked puzzled and said 'not even by a minute or two'. On reflection if you look at her schedule, it allowed nearly six hours for the last 70 mile, which is about 12 mph. Lynne was averaging probably 15 mph at least. It had been decided not to tell her in the Highlands in the dark in case it demoralised her when she was a long way from the end. Telling her here did the trick. The sun was starting to give a bit of warmth and the wind was picking up even stronger, unlike last year when it was misty, raining, and a raw easterly wind at this point. Lynne reached another significant place now

8.22 am Berriedale - 796 miles Now only 44 min behind schedule, another 7 min clawed back here. I was forced out of the van here by Tony and Colin, to run behind her and shout her on - No chance - the legs didn't work, the lungs and brain wouldn't function and I was limping and gasping. Lynne looked to one side of her and powered away. She said afterwards that she heard these fumbling footsteps and heavy breathing and thought it was someone trying to steal her new bike !!

These climbs as I have waxed lyrical about in previous reports, are vicious and very drawn out when you are tired, and after over two days and two nights in the saddle now, the muscles are screaming out on the 1 in 5 (20%) hairpins of which there are a few on each climb. However, I suppose being out of the saddle gives your backside a rest! Over the top now and settling down on the flat to a steady 18 mph. Just one more painful climb at Dunbeath now and still reducing her deficit to be just 28 min down at

9.10 am Lybster - 810 miles Fighting hard to maintain 16 mph the road is very undulating but Lynne is pleased when she sees Alasdair Washington of the Caithness CC. What a welcome as she really knows she's here when locals start to pop up. He knows what a terrific struggle she's had as Jim kept them informed so they can help with the 1,000 mile organisation as they had done successfully last year for Gethin Butler. Along this stretch we nearly all got 'taken out' by a huge supermarket lorry which overtook us and tried to get in the gap between us and Lynne. He was doing about 50 mph and with wheels locked and smoke coming off his tyres he nearly took three cars out coming the opposite way, as well as Lynne.

Everyone was forced to brake and stop. In hindsight we should have been closer to her to protect her on this very narrow main road.

9.50 am Wick 823 miles Only 2 min down. We saw a nice couple of observers here so we slowed down and gave them our registration number to save them trying to guess. We said hello and thank you and they were pleased that Lynne had made it again to the end. Only 17 miles to go now. I've chewed my fingernails again, the only time I ever do that is on a record attempt. The schedule here allows for a very slow finish. To equal her existing record she has got 1 hr 58 mints to do it. It's a very long meandering 17 miles and it seems to go on forever. At the right turn at Reiss, the Landrover overtakes with the timekeeper on board to time the finish. One green horizon is followed by another green horizon and then there is a sea view. We must be nearly there, over the next rise, is that John O'Groats? No it's Freswick, just another village to go through. Now we can see the Orkney Islands, Strom, Hoy, South Ronaldsay: surely John O'Groats is next? No, just a few crofters' cottages on the edge of a peat bog. Then the last bit of downhill and there it is, we can just see the pointed conical roofs of the hotel. She's flown from Wick in 55 minutes, swooping down the long main street past our Guest House, and now in the last half mile down to the hotel, Lynne takes the wrong turn and goes into the car park (just like when she left Lands End Hotel last year) and back out onto the right entrance to the finish line.



**Lynne has made it, taking 1 hour
3 minutes off her own record!!**

**Lands End to John O'Groats in 2 days, 4
hours 45 minutes 11 seconds**

What a ride. No one in the history of the Road Records Association has taken their own End to End record, paced or unpaced, on consecutive years on the same machine.

She finished so fast that the local club folk haven't got here yet. Phil and Stuart, Liz's



cousins are here to greet her over the line. They live here at Canisbay with magnificent views as far as the eye can see. The last but not least of our very good omens. Having seen Lynne in at John O'Groats three years running our very special thanks to them both.

Tony and Mike Johnson were exuberant. Lynne had a quick hello and a kiss and turned to retrace over the line to go back to our Guest House up the road as quickly as possible as we knew the clock was ticking and we were now into the remainder of the 1,000 miles. I explained to Phil and Stuart that I wouldn't be able to visit them this year as I had done previously, as I was needed on the 1,000, which would take well into the third night. They are always amazed to see Lynne get so far in two days, and they promised to pop out during the remaining few hours to see the 1,000 completed !.

Lynne got out of her tights and warm clothing now and had a shower, soup and a bite to eat, a

5 min sleep and gets into racing strip. Tony played Eileen Sheridan's message of support in which she said she hoped Lynne would break the 1,000 record. Good gadgets these mobile phones, if you can understand them. Lynne was overwhelmed at this point, as we all were. I opted to stay out in the fresh air and clean Lynne's bike and check it over. I could also tidy the van a bit and get lights and spares ready for the third night. I felt surprisingly fresh at this point, unlike the two previous records where I've suffered with the 'collywobbles' and 'forward movement'. Approximately an hour and a quarter were taken here for a break.

Yvonne and Colin doing a magnificent job. Colin couldn't do too much to Lynne's muscles because of the tenderness in the legs and the deep ache. Just a light rub. Yvonne helped Lynne in and out of the shower. Lynne didn't collapse this year but she did see very vivid colours in the shower and bright red flowers, but when she checked next day, the tiles were white and the curtains plain.

Now for the 1,000 miles

Lynne emerged at midday looking as if she was just going to start a 25 mile. She hadn't realised the clock was still ticking towards the final total, and said 'how long have I had'. When we said 1 hr 17 min, she said 'I would have been out half an hour ago if I'd realised'. As she is being re-started by Tony Lynne says 'Ooh Dad, you've cleaned my bike !'



12.02 pm Lynne restarts - 160 miles to go plus extra miles for safety. Along the road that runs along the very tip of Scotland towards Thurso now, with magnificent views to the right over the Orkneys. Lynne was in very good spirits and so were we. She now had until 7 am the next morning to complete the 1,000 miles, but we all hope she doesn't take that long because Beef Stew and Potatoes are on the menu up until midnight courtesy of Ian and his Wife at the Caber Feidh Guest House at John O'Groats.

1.22 pm Thurso - 859 miles Lynne was now 12 min down on schedule that only allowed for a half hour stop at John O'Groats, and it was quite a moderate mph set which aimed to complete the 1,000 miles at half past midnight. We went left now to the traffic lights at:

2.28 pm Wick - 879 miles Just over the hour to complete that last 20 miles against the wind, now she's 20 min up on that schedule so we may get our beef stew after all. Quite a few squally showers and sunshine around here, a bit like April. Luckily Lynne manages to miss most of the rain, lovely rainbows were to be seen across the islands. Lynne stops for warmer clothing now in the late afternoon. She presses on

4.15pm Castletown - 904 miles Now nearly 40 min up, a good tailwind on that section has really helped her reach

5.15 pm Wick second time - 929 miles

now 53 min up. A broken down bus blocked the dead turn here and we panicked when we saw the road closed sign, however Phil and Stuart were there to point out the sign and marshal Lynne through to turn a few yards short around Mike Johnson. By heck, he gets everywhere that chap! Lynne is still very positive and cheerful, although she complained about the road surfaces from time to time. She still occasionally hesitates on the pedals, so she is still imagining red traffic lights that aren't there. She stops now

to put full kit of warm clothing on for the last 80 miles. When you think about it, when was the last time you ventured out to do 80 miles. A daunting task for most people, but coming after 930 miles. Non stop. The brain cannot perceive what she had done. There were virtually no signs of weariness at all and when she stopped for any reason she got back on and rode off at 18 mph almost mechanically. Apart from the imaginary red traffic lights, she keeps seeing the front of her helmet and ducking thinking she is going under a very low bridge. Full lights have been fitted now for the last time as she returns to



7.33 pm Castleton 954 miles 1 hr 35 min up. Fantastic, she now returns through Thurso towards Wick for the last time. All along here we can see the Northern Lights or 'Aurora Borealis' for the clever ones. A fantastic sight, a crescent shaped band of light lying horizontally over the islands out to sea with vertical fingers of shimmering silvery light playing into the sky. Pulsing and changing shape from one minute to the next. Are we dreaming? It is the third night, Lynne points at it out to sea, I think it was a first time experience for most of us. Even the locals from the Wick Wheelers and the Caithness CC said it was the best they had seen. They were such a positive part of the last day from Helmsdale onwards and were gathering force in numbers as the mileage increased, until in the end they were lining all the turns and road junctions. The helpers in the feed car were magnificent all the way through her ride and on this last stretch our Mike had bought flashing devils horns headgear for all to wear like Halloween characters, just to keep her 'spirits up'. Lynne really appreciated all this, but after the Northern Lights, what other natural phenomena could succeed it. How about a meteor shower, just to see her through the last bit of darkness !

9.18 pm Wick turn last time - 979 miles 1 hr 31 min up. A good gathering here to send her back to Thurso for the last time.

10.35 pm Thurso Traffic Lights - 999.7 miles

10.37 pm 1,000 miles

**Total Time 2 days 16 hours 37 minutes a new record!!
This beats the old record by 7hr 23min**

But it's not over yet. Lynne has to carry on back towards John O'Groats.

Tony Shardlow is taking all intermediate time checks now and it's deadly serious in the van. Just another 12 miles to do as a precaution to falling short on the distance when the End to End is re-measured. Remembering what happened to Dick Poole's 1,000 mile attempt that fell short by a few hundred yards back in 1965. From this point the club lads of the Caithness CC had put 1 mile marker points along the route. Adding to this, Tony had noted lots of intermediate check points to identify features such as road signs, house entrances, 30 mph signs etc. We now had to check Lynne through all of these places as accurately as possible. I shouted 'now' Tony split the time and recorded it, and Colin read the trip meter. Deadly serious stuff. All three of us had had such a laugh earlier on when preparing for this. Colin trying to boost his job title to 'odometer operative'. For the next twelve miles we carried out this procedure right through to the Castle of Mey. By this time the convoy of cars had grown a little, this normally being a very quiet stretch of road at this time of night. The last two miles were all uphill and considering the fact that Lynne probably didn't need to do them anyway, she attacked them at 18 - 23 mph, until the last lay by.

THAT'S IT - NOW IT'S ALL OVER !!

Tears of joy, it seemed like a dream, all of the cycling fraternity were out. We were so pleased Lynne had done it at last. It seems that what the God's had taken away from her on the first day, they had repaid on the second and third day. Lynne had done the first 500 miles to Johnstone Bridge in 30 hours, and the last 500 in 34 hrs. What a recovery. She had done the remaining 160 miles as fast as Gethin. There were handshakes and hugs all round. Many thanks to Alasdair Washington and Malcolm Grey of the Caithness CC. And the members of the Wick Wheelers for their welcoming help and support over the remaining miles. Phil and Stuart who saw Lynne in lots of different locations, and as was mentioned before, it's been the highlight of the season up there for the last three years running. Four successful End to Ends and two successful 1,000 mile records.



Its over all too quickly and back at the accommodation, Lynne phones Liz, has a shower, has a bit of beef stew, opens a bottle of champagne from our Mike, and chats until about 2 am. Apart from her eyes looking a little bloodshot she looks quite normal and is so relieved it's all over. She said apart from being a little bit weary and sleepy she felt good. She thanked everybody for making it possible and off to bed.

4th October - Friday Up at 8.30 for a decent breakfast, vehicles loaded, postcards sent. Jim Turner said he couldn't believe it when he

got a postcard off Lynne, thanking him, from John O'Groats. I said Lynne's got to have something to think about as she's climbing Drumochter, so she made herself a mental list of who to send a card to ' there's my Nan, my Gran, my Mum, Jim and Anne, the lads at the shop etc, etc'. That's Lynne.

Epilogue

Lynne had received a call from Eileen Sheridan congratulating her on breaking both records, especially the 1,000 mile record that she has held for 48 years. She so wanted Lynne to get it and I think it will have stirred up lots of painful and happy memories for her. I know she can recall it as if it were yesterday, walking up Helmsdale with her manager Frank Southall and Harry H England, the then editor of The Cycling Magazine who kept his journal informed hour by hour of her progress with text and photo's. Nowadays you have to be a continental professional with a stubble dressed as a 'lion king' or someone caught up in a drug scandal to warrant any attention, let alone a photograph.

If anyone out there in the 'media' world could see what a story there is, and we've informed enough influential people over the last few years. The hundreds of phone calls Jim had, the 9,000 or more hits of the web site over 5 days from all over the world. There is a story to be told, not just to the people who know her and go out to see her go through, but for anyone with an imagination and ambition to do something themselves, maybe it would inspire future youngsters to embark on a physical achievement. What does one thin column in Cycling Weekly, with no decent heading and no photo inspire. There I've had my say.

WE ALL KNOW IT HAPPENED

How many people outside the cycling fraternity know about Lynne and Gethin's epic rides. I am afraid if it's any longer than about one and a half hours and no reward, you can forget it. An email on the web site from strangers to the cycling world who were driving back from Cornwall, Wendy and Dave Lambert, said "Little did we guess what we saw when our car passed a lone cyclist plodding up a steep hill in Cornwall, two mornings ago. Back home in Kent that evening thanks to the internet we found out and we have tracked Lynne's progress ever since. What an unbelievable achievement. We feel privileged to have seen a bit of cycling history in the making. Many, many congratulations Lynne from us both."

Another entry from Geoff Lonsdale, Clevedon & District CC who has seen most End to Enders through and has, with a team, marshalled Lynne through Bristol two years running in the pouring rain. "Saw Lynne north of Bristol in pouring rain, got soaked but worth it, sent a message to Jim Turner when I saw the End to End had been broken - I sit here with tears in my eyes after reading the latest update! Fantastic, can't say any more." Geoff isn't the only one; this is how anybody feels, seeing an End to Ender through their patch, a lone figure disappearing into the dark or into rain, or the early stages with a few hundred miles left to go, with the odds' against them. It leaves you tearful when you've found out they have done it two days later. Another message from Margaret and Jim Hopper 'congratulations Lynne on beating your own End to End, what a ride, she is truly wonderful, now for the 1,000 mile, we wish you all the best and are with you all the way. When you reach your goal you will be the perfect successor to a great lady, Eileen Sheridan.

A small piece on the web site from Phil sums her up 'Saw you at John O'Groats, such an amazing feat. Such an amazing time, just wonderful. Saw you outside Thurso, going so strong - saw you at Wick, cool and strong - so determined. Lynne you're a star and there are many in the Caithness sky tonight. However you are the brightest. All our love Phil and Stuart.

Lynne has gone from being my little girl to my hero ever since her first 24 hour, taking her place amongst the 'greats' of the past. Eileen Sheridan, Joan Kershaw, Beryl Burton, John Arnold, Dick Poole, John Woodburn, Pete Swinden, John Withers, Pat Kenny and current day, Andy Wilkinson and Gethin Butler, to name but a few.

She has been actively riding long distance time trials for about 14 years culminating in the End to End the last three years and 1,000 miles. When I help or drive the following car and she's going very well and conditions are good I say to myself, 'that's our Lynne up there' but when the weather is bad and she's down on schedule or in the Highlands climbing Drumochter and her eyes are tired I think 'that's my little girl'.

An amusing incident that happened in the Johnstonbridge area, was that Lynne had mentioned to Mike Johnson that her eyes were sore. By the time the message got relayed back to the feed car, it had become that her a*se was sore. The team pulled Lynne in, chamois crème at the ready. Lynne was rather puzzled at first and then everyone had a good laugh when they realised their mistake.

Finally, a dedication to my wife Liz, never knowing when her life would be turned upside down again. Three years running, never knowing when to book a holiday, always watching the weather forecasts and making contingency plans for staffing the Bike Shop while Lynne and I are away, coping with the emotion as the drama unfolds. The stress of being at home and worrying about it is probably greater than being on the road. Putting up with the little outbursts leading up to the attempt - and that's just from me - and always trying to appear calm. All this has provided a harmonious environment during these years.

After a 14 hour drive home, we unloaded the van with the clothes, bikes and bottles and then its back to work on the Monday. Lynne serves her first customer 'Yes I can recommend these shorts, very hard wearing and comfortable, especially if you are doing a long ride'.

Did the last five days really happen or were we all hallucinating ?



Left to right: Mike Johnson (Driver), Colin Baldwin (Driver/ Physio / Feeder), Yvonne Unsworth (Feeder / Lynne's Personal Assistant), Ron Sant (RRA Observer), Tony Shardlow (RRA Observer / Timekeeper), Lynne Taylor, John Taylor (Dad and Driver / Mechanic), Neil Peart (Feeder/Driver), Mike Taylor (Brother and Feeder / Driver)

Missing from the photo are Christine Minto (RRA Timekeeper / Observer), Peter Swinden (RRA Observer)