



**Penguins Assemble – The Penguin Peloton at the foot of Guy's Tower**

**THE PENGUIN PELOTON – BERMONDSEY TO BRUGES – TOWER TO TOWER CHARITY CYCLE RIDE**

**Day 1 - 86 miles**

On 30 April 2023, 28 Penguins, a mix of Students and Fossils, ranging in age from 16 to 61, assembled as a Peloton at Guys Hospital Tower near London Bridge. We were there to undertake the Bermondsey to Bruges (B2B) challenge to raise money for Penguins Against Cancer ([www.penguinsagaincancer.org.uk](http://www.penguinsagaincancer.org.uk)), (PAC), a UK registered charity. Also there were the incredible Rat Pack Support Group of Black Rats (Sasha and Tony Smith), and White Rats, Paul Gillam (motorcycle outrider and polymath) and Jok Dunbar, in his SUV Tardis, which possesses seemingly limitless internal capacity. After a photo and the ritual exchange of barbed comments among several middle-aged participants, we set off. As is traditional, Team Jackass led the way, with the youthful Chinstraps following. Team Davis containing Pat, Pete and Toby Davis were next to lurch forward, with the noisy Macaronis bringing up the rear.



**Leaving Bermondsey**



**Singing Billericay Dickie (in Billericay)**

The route, exquisitely planned by Trevor Kelly, as ever, took us over Tower Bridge and then out to Essex along an intermittent cycle path. We enjoyed the delights of North-East London, and visited Billericay, paying homage to the late, great Ian Dury, before arriving at Café A, adjacent to the M25.



**Café A, Upminster**

After a slightly chaotic food stop we continued through peaceful and bucolic rural Essex in sunshine, passing Tiptree (of jam fame) and Maldon (of sea salt fame) on our way to The Bricklayers Arms at Little Bentley where the unflappable team of Will and Liz Nicholls, provided excellent lasagne, beef & ale pie, vegetable linguini and outstanding pavlova plus a fine selection of local ales. Toby Davis managed to get us all in, fed, watered, out and the bill paid in an hour – good effort.



**The Bricklayers Arms at Little Bentley**



The last leg saw us reach Harwich just before dusk, where the superb administration of Stena line kicked in. A quick change then The Penguin Peloton AGM, which elected the Rat Pack of Tony, Sasha, Gilly and Jok as Honorary Peloton Members. Everyone then repaired to the bar to celebrate, allowing Tony, Sasha, Gilly and Jok to buy them drinks for the rest of the evening.



**Relaxing on the Harwich-Hook of Holland Ferry after the Penguin Peloton AGM**

## **Day 2 - 85 miles**

As seems to be an annual recurrence, Day 2 dawned far too early. We disembarked at Hook of Holland and after 10 miles of pleasant, flat cycling we undertook the first of 3 unopposed river crossings, at Maasluis. At least most of us did. Pete Davis very kindly bought tickets for all his Team, who had boarded the river ferry in anticipation, but in doing so managed to miss the departure. His team waved cheerfully from the ferry as it sailed. We stopped at a very well appointed café in Goedereede for coffee and pancakes and departed just as Pete arrived.



**Disembarking at Hook of Holland**



**The Maasluis Ferry – without Pete Davis**



**'t SAS café in Goedereede**

Cycling in Holland in good weather is fantastic. Bikes seem to have right of way everywhere and the tarmac is smooth (the cobbles are not however). Despite the easy conditions, Pat Davis's choice of a secondhand clown's bicycle from Billy Smart's yard sale was proving problematic. He was able to balance a large ball on his nose whilst juggling, but was not able to maintain sufficient average speed. However as with all true troubadours he persevered. A brief stop at Lekkerbek was followed by a dash for the second river ferry at Vlissingen which miraculously most of the Peloton boarded. The next 30 mins saw youthful, energetic and vibrant Students having animated conversations, and 5 of the Fossils asleep. We disembarked and completed the run to Bruges, undertaking the 3<sup>rd</sup> river crossing on a manually powered Dad's Army type ferry. On reaching the delightful Velotel, we were joined by the Sherry Squad.



**'Bozo does Bruges'**



**Don't Panic Captain Mainwaring!**





### **Jammin' Good - All Right Now**

A quick change then a musical extravaganza staged by the 'Jammin Good' duo of Gilly and Glorious Gaynor with their guitars. Old classics including, Country Roads, All Right Now and Wonderwall were sung enthusiastically, with the MC Pat Gush performing Percy the Penguin to great applause.

We then adjourned for a delectable dinner, superbly organised by Roy Dixon, and sampled some of the local libations. A quick trip to Bruges's famous square followed. Many of the Peloton became reinvigorated, and some became tired. It was a great evening.



**Dinner at the Velotel, Bruges**



**Revelling Penguins at the Bruges Clock Tower**

## Day 3 - 54 miles

Strangely, Day 3 arrived far too early. Not everybody was ready at the appointed hour. Such phrases as 'I set my alarm for the wrong time' provoked derision. We eventually set off, briefly stopping at the Bruges tower for a team photo. The clock in the Tower was ticking and we were up against it to make the ferry timings. We went on to Veurne and its fantastic square, churches, and cafes where a significant mechanical issue put Team Jackass on the edge. Team Davis were also somewhat tardy. Eventually we reached Dunkirk port for our planned evacuation, and as is traditional, we encountered a 2 hour delay as we missed the first ferry. However, this provided an excellent opportunity to swing the lantern and wallow in nostalgia having completed 225 miles of cycling. Eventually, everyone made it back to Dover where we dispersed, most to Guys Hospital via train. Lutz however needed more, and set off by bike to London en route to Leeds. A total for him of over 500 miles in 5 days. Respektieren.



**Team Jackass at the Bruges Clock Tower**

Tim Price a Penguin stalwart was unable to join B2B physically as work commitments saw him on a South Atlantic island counting Penguins. He did however, complete 225 miles on his Watt Bike over 3 days whilst also maintaining his day job and raising a stack of money. Great work Tim.





**Tim in his day job. 1, 2, 3, 4, etc**



**Students on the Ferry – alert, vibrant conversation**

At time of writing the B2B Peloton has just exceeded its £50 000 target of money raised for Penguins Against Cancer. B2B was a great experience, no significant injuries (occasional wounded pride), a renewing of old bonds and forging of new ones. The Students had enormous patience, listening to endless anecdotes of how it was in the old days from a bunch of crusty Fossils, and mostly managed the cycling almost effortlessly.



**Fossils on the Ferry – silent contemplation**



**Lutz in Leeds – 500 miles in 5 days**

I would like to pay tribute to all of the more than 400 incredibly generous individuals, and organisations, whose unstinting altruism has enabled us to reach our fundraising target. I would also like to thank the Penguin Peloton, Rat Pack Support Group and Sherry Squad for their camaraderie, humour, tolerance and perseverance. A fantastic 3 days (5 for Lutz).

**The Penguin Peloton:**

Team Jackass: Charlie, Trevor, Graham, Roy, Paul, Simon, Theo

Team Chinstrap: Ben C, Tom, Rowan, Archie, Freddie, Jessie, Nick

Team Davis: Pete, Darren, Pat D, Matt, Rory, Rob, Toby

Team Macaroni: Lutz, Guy, Jamie, George, Alan, Kelly, Ben R

**The Rat Pack Support Group:**

The Black Rats: Tony, Sasha      The White Rats: Gilly, Jok

**The Sherry Squad:**

Pat G, Immie, Oriel, Charlotte, Gaynor, Pete Dooley, Mick, Geraint, Sarah, Katherine



**The Sherry Squad relaxing**

***Charlie Beardmore***

***President***

***The Penguin Peloton***

***8 May 2023***