

THE PENGUIN PELOTON – WINDSOR TO GUY’S VIA WALES – CHARITY RIDE

Day 1 – 1ST May 2026 - 148 km distance 1110 m ascent

On 1ST May 2026, The Penguin Peloton, a motley mix of 31 students, young healthcare professionals and Fossils, ranging in age from 18 to 63, coalesced. The party met at Windsor and Eton Riverside train station in the shadow of Windsor Castle (*founded by William the Conqueror in the 11th Century*).

The Pelotonistas were there to undertake the Windsor to Guy’s (W2G) challenge, via Wales, to raise money for Penguins Against Cancer (www.penguinsagainstcancer.org.uk), (PAC), a UK registered charity. Also present were the incredible Rat Pack Support Group of Black Rats: Sasha and Tony Smith and White Rat Paul Gillam (artist, musician, photographer and polymath) plus Blue and Gold Rats: Pete Davis and Trevor Kelly, both refereed out of cycling by injury and illness.



Penguins Assemble – The Penguin Peloton, like a coiled spring

Following the customary photo and pre-ride banter we got going. Team Jackass, with plenty of age and mass, lumbered across the start line, followed by Ben Challacombe’s Chinstraps, Aarash Jazayeri’s youthful Macaronis, and Team Fairy led by their King, Lutz Hostert.

The route, exquisitely planned by Trevor Kelly, as ever, took us through Windsor via Dedworth and Oakley Green, Waltham St Lawrence (*which has an interesting statue of Sir Henry Neville who was involved in Essex's rebellion against Elizabeth I*), Twyford and Sonning, aka Hostertville, (*described by Jerome K Jerome as 'the most fairy-like little nook on the whole river'*) to our first tea stop at Caversham Bridge.

We were soon away again transiting through Pangbourne, Aldworth and Farnborough until reaching our lunch stop at the delightful Lamb Inn in Wantage (*birthplace of King Alfred the Great*), where we had a fulsome meal, and some excellent real ale.

We continued via Uffington of White Horse fame (*described by the Guardian as 'a masterpiece of minimalist art'*), Watchfield and the Defence Academy, Highworth, Castle Eaton and Down Ampney (*whose airfield played an important role in the 1944 Battle of Arnhem*). We eventually reached Cerney Wick, having skirted the Air Mounting Centre, stopping for refreshment at the Linwood and Co café.



Penny Farthing rider about to overtake the Chinstraps

The final stage was a fantastic ride through the Cotswolds (*from Old English meaning sheep pen on the high open land*) including Cirencester, Winstone Hill, Warren Hill and Upton St Leonards before gaining our overnight accommodation in Gloucester. We partook of a sumptuous, and most exotic, banquet at the Aroma Indian restaurant, where JC and Darren very generously bought beer for the whole Peloton, whilst Jamie very generously supplied a number of bottles of wine.

Once suitably settled, with refreshment in hand, it was time for the Penguin Peloton AGM. Business was conducted suitably efficiently, and Pete Davis and Trevor Kelly (as Blue and Gold Rats) were elected as Honorary Peloton Members, entitling them to buy drinks for the rest of the Peloton for the remainder of the evening. Eventually everyone returned to the delights of the Travelodge for some rest.

Day 2 – 2nd May 2026 - 130 km 1500 m ascent

Unsurprisingly, as perennially, Day 2 dawned far too soon. A delightful 2 hour rural perambulation allowed us to see: pheasants, partridge, deer, kites (lots), buzzards, kestrels and our domesticated Rats of various colours. We passed through Twigworth, Tirley, Upleadon and Newent before pausing at a charming stop next to the A449 at Ross on Wye.



Transiting past a field of Red Kites – 20 or more feeding on carrion

Shortly thereafter we crossed into Wales, passing through Skenfrith with its fantastic Norman Castle (*Castell Ynysgynwraidd in Welsh*), established to guard the route from Wales to Hereford. Thereafter, Llanvetherine and Llandewi Skirrid (*overlooked by Skirrid Fawr a traditional Christian pilgrimage site, and home to the Michelin starred Walnut Tree, once named the best restaurant in Britain*). We eventually reached Abergavenny, and an excellent lunch of Nasi Goreng (*Malay for fried rice*) at the well appointed Portico Restaurant.

A very significant climb along a disused railway track eventually topped out at Blaenavon, a world heritage site and home to Pwll Mawr, the Big Pit, historically a centre of coal and iron ore mining, and to a party tea at the Whistle Stop pub. When we entered the pub the sun was shining and all was well. On exiting, the wind had got up, the temperature had dropped remarkably and it had started raining. A lot. Some hardy souls pressed onwards to visit the Pontypool Tower, a local tourist attraction, whilst others cycled straight to the hotel in ever worsening conditions.



Very happy Pelotonistas at the breathtaking Pontypool Tower

Eventually we were all safely installed in the Newport Budget Ibis, leaving many puddles. Spirits were restored by the appearance of Will Taylor with his mother's world renowned Welsh Cakes. Dinner was provided in the nearby superb Lyceum Tavern run by Landlord Tony, who serves excellent Stout. Music was laid on by Elvis of all people, and the tab for the whole evening was picked up by the ever generous Dave Bellis, plus a very substantial contribution from Paul Chase (whatever Joan Armatrading says DO NOT Drop the Pilot).



Ascending from Abergavenny



Will's Mum and her incredible Welsh Cakes



The Lyceum – world famous concert venue



Elvis Live at the Lyceum 2nd May 2026 – I was there (as Max Boyce might say)

Day 3 – 3rd May 2026 – 157 km distance 1180 m elevation

Day 3 dawned brighter, but still rather early, and after a budget breakfast, we meandered slowly through suburban Newport, Kol gazing enviously as we bypassed a number of industrial estates. We had a welcome cup of tea at Nellie's in Chepstow then crossed the old Severn Bridge (apparently exceeding the speed limit for bicycles). We experienced a delightful ride through the northern hinterland of Bristol, plus a reprise of the Cotswolds, seeing spellbinding synchronised sprinting of 4 young deer in impeccable symmetry. Lunch was at the delightful Bell Inn at Yatton consisting of a delicious, yet gargantuan, Meg and chips, and some very fine real ale.

We continued through Calne and the spectacular Vale of Pewsey passing close to the Wilton Windmill (*the only operating windmill in Wessex, built in 1821, 22 years prior to the founding of Guy's Hospital RFC*) and the Pewsey White Horse (*the smallest of the 8 canonical white horses in Wiltshire, cut into the chalk in 1937, 94 years after the founding of Guy's Hospital RFC*). A brief refreshment stop in Honey Street in the north Wessex Downs was followed by the final push to Andover, passing through Easton Royal, Burbage, Tidcombe, Tangle, and Hatherden. We were hosted at the Best Western hotel by the incredibly hospitable Paniz Westfaleh who provided an outstanding buffet (including homemade Lavashak – Persian Fruit Leather – an unusual delicacy for Hampshire – Ambrosia!) which was just what was required after a very long day, much of it into a headwind.



Croeso I Loegr



Tom attacks the last 10% of his Meg and chips

We then repaired to the incredible Envy lounge and were hosted by the exceptional Carlos Akbas and his superb team. Outstanding Mezes was followed by a combination of steak, non-Meg fish and vegetarian options. We were joined by the Sherry Squad of Niki and Charlotte. A musical extravaganza followed, from the most excellent Jammin' Good (led by Paul the Maestro Gillam [lead guitar and backing vocals], Pat 'Fingers' Davis [rhythm guitar], Dai 'Revs' Evans [electric ukelele], Glorious Gaynor Beardmore Sister in Law [backing vocals and guitar] and Will 'The Voice of the Valleys' Taylor [lead vocals]). The usual ecelctic mix of numbers including West Country Roads, Delilah and Sweet Caroline was sung with gusto, Leaving on a Jetplane considerably so, and rounded off with the traditional Amarillo conga.

Jamie Barwell then took to the floor (efforts to provide him with his own small stage came to nought when the intended table disintegrated under manipulation) and produced a magnificent rendition of Running Bear. Eventually people went to bed.



Jammin' Good warming up in the corner, Pelotonistas carbloafing



Catarina and Lutz compare tans



'Wasn't me Guvnor, honest'

Day 4 – 4th May 2026 – 127 km distance 710 m elevation

Day 4 arrived far too early for many people and some were not ready at the appointed hour. The Peloton was somewhat muted on leaving Andover waving a wistful farewell to the wonderful Paniz, heading back to the Downs, passing Whitchurch and Hannington. We were welcomed warmly at the Little Roses café for the first coffee stop, after which the Penguins became a little more perky. The second leg saw us pay homage to the Iron Duke at Stratfield Saye before proceeding through Eversley, Yateley, Blackwater, Camberley and the Old Dean prior to lunch at the Cedar Tree pub in Bagshot.



Jackasses, plus 2 promoted from the Chinstraps, ready for the off on Day 4

Following a pizza and chilli con carne fest we continued through Windlesham, Chobham, Ottershaw and Addlestone to the last intermediate stop at Walton. The final leg, now familiar to Penguins from years past, saw the delights of Bushey and Richmond Parks, including numerous parakeets, deer and a heron or two before reaching the dust and grime of Central London, finally arriving at the Mother Ship, with yet more exotic wildlife. Showers, a change of clothes and an excellent meal in the Market Porter concluded a highly enjoyable 4 days.



The bulk of the Penguin Peloton plus the Black Rats finish at Guy's Memorial Arch after 562 km (351 miles) distance and 4500 m (14 850 ft) of ascent in 4 days

All the riders worked hard. The Road Captain (*Lutz in the absence of Trevor*) awards were:

Silver Award for Best Novice Rider: After much deliberation, a 5-way tie among Shakira, Catarina, Tom, Arun and Kai

Gold Award for Best Navigator: Theo

Gold award for Best Team Leader: Aarash

Gold award for Best Team: Macaronis



Kai accepts his no-expense-spared award whilst subtly checking Lutz's BMI

I would like to pay tribute to all of the more than 300 incredibly generous individuals, and organisations, whose unstinting altruism has enabled us to exceed our fundraising target, significantly, once again. I would also like to thank the Penguin Peloton, Rat Pack Support Group (Black, White, and Blue and Gold) and Sherry Squad for their camaraderie, humour, tolerance and perseverance. Tony and Sasha Smith were outstanding as always. Special

thanks also go to: Trevor Kelly (Superb route planning, described as 'best routes ever ridden in UK' and vehicle support), Lutz Hostert (safety and shirts), Graham Bevan (hotels and finance), George Tsolakides (fundraising), Nick Gibbins (Market Porter dinner), The Macaronis (all stops and lunches), Aarash Jazayeri (Bike lock up and showers at Guy's), Paul Gillam and the rest of Jammin' Good (music), Paul Gillam (video and photos), Pete Davis (vehicle support). I must commend the Macaronis, a number of whom were inexperienced cyclists, for their authenticity, empathy, openness and determination throughout. Chapeau. Apologies if I have missed anyone out. A fantastic 4 days.

The Penguin Peloton:

Team Jackass: Charlie, Julian, Simon, Nigel, Andrew, Paul, Jamie, Pete

Team Chinstrap: Ben, Nick, Jez, Guy Barwell, Dave, John, Guy Mclellean, Wayne, Graham

Team Macaroni: Aarash, Theo, Shakira, Catarina, Kai, Tom, Arun

Team Fairy: Lutz, Darren, Matt Miller, Rob, Matt Rose, Alan, Stephen

The Support Group:

The Black Rats: Tony, Sasha

The White Rat: Gilly

The Blue and Gold Rats: Pete, Trevor

The Sherry Squad: Niki, Charlotte

The W2G ride has so far raised over £70,000 for Penguins Against Cancer



Charlie Beardmore
President
The Penguin Peloton
20 May 2026