

Tower to Tower 2022 (T6)

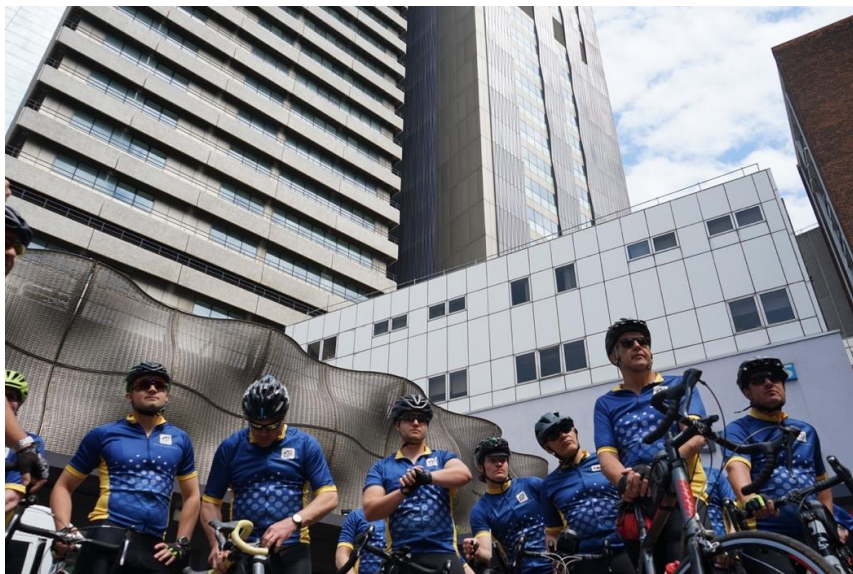
Charity Cycle Ride: 3rd - 5th June 2022
Guy's Hospital Tower, London – Eiffel Tower, Paris



Start to Finish – Tower to Tower – Arch to Arch

The Tower-to-Tower 2022 (T6) cycle ride, between Guy's Hospital Tower, London and the Eiffel Tower, Paris, ran from 3rd to 5th June. (It was also an Arch-to-Arch trip - Guy's Hospital Memorial Arch and the Arc de Triomphe).

T6 involved 4 relatively young, fit, enthusiastic and innovative students plus 17 older, larger sceptics, with a combined age of approximately 1000 years. The route was meticulously put together by Trevor Kelly the Navigator (who was very unfortunately unable to take part due to COVID infection) and took in nearly 200 miles of varied scenery, including the magnificent Avenue Verte running south from Dieppe to Paris.



The Penguin Peloton prepares to depart Guy's Hospital

Day 1 (62 miles) commenced at 1pm with photos taken underneath The Arch and Tower at Guy's Hospital before, as is traditional, the Jackass group led off, followed by the Chinstraps and the noisy Macaronis. Harry Costello, called up as a late replacement for Breezy, fitted in seamlessly. Despite Breezy's absence, we breezed through **Coulsdon** and all was well until Jack Knife corner reared up from the shadows. A steep gradient led to a hairpin turn with a wet adverse camber and it did for Geraint and Ben. Both ejected from their machines at the critical moment but, undaunted, remounted to continue on to our next port of call, the superb Green Man pub at **Horsted Keynes**, where Austin Moran's team provided an excellent Pie of the Day. (Ben had actually sustained a significant injury which was not apparent until our return to UK)



Coulsdon Café & The Green Man, Horsted Keynes

We rode on through the rolling Sussex countryside to arrive at **Newhaven** port where, having re-established our rights to occupy the cabins we had already paid for, the Penguin Peloton settled down to some refreshment and a precious few hours of sleep.

Day 2 (70 miles, 78 miles for the Jackasses) dawned much too early. We left the ferry in the murky gloom to explore **Dieppe**. Notwithstanding the fact that the Avenue Verte starts about 400 metres from the Ferry Terminal gate, and that he had been told he was going the wrong way, Kol elected to take the Jackasses on a magical mystery tour up hill and down dale in the opposite direction (*he has form in this – please see PAC report on the King Alfred's Way*) for 40 minutes or so. Eventually Kol's internal gyroscope righted itself and we reached the Avenue Verte to enjoy 50 km of superb countryside, with smooth, flat tarmac and no traffic. Bliss. We reached Boulangerie Sophie, **Neufchatel** just as it was opening (*I say 'we' in the widest sense – the Jackasses were much later*) and enjoyed delicious pain au chocolat avec amand.



4.30 am Dieppe Port



6.30am Sophie's Boulangerie, Neufchatel



Avenue Verte



Gournay, Place de la Republique



The route continued to **Gournay**, the predicted thunderstorms stayed away, and the sun shone. The village café offered a range of drinks - a narrow range . . . of one - Strong Black Coffee. That's why it is called a Café. Ideal for rehydration after a hot day in the saddle. The last leg was to the historic town of **Gisors** with its famous castle, to stay in the puzzingly named, somewhat dated, Hotel Moderne, opposite the train station. We received a hearty welcome at the adjacent Bar Templiers. Eventually Wocca appeared, having mysteriously become detached from his group and spending a very comfortable couple of hours in a rural hostelry watching the French Open tennis. The coach party arrived from UK, and following a quick change we went for dinner at the unprepossessingly named Le Donjon (The Dungeon) restaurant. An excellent evening of ribald banter, anecdotes and nostalgia. Mick Martin was extraordinarily generous in picking up the bar tab for the whole of the Peloton plus support crew.



Outside the Hotel Moderne, Gisors, Bar Templiers in the background



Restaurant Le Donjon, Gisors



Eglise St Gervais, Gisors

Day 3 (50 miles, 54 miles for the Jackasses) also seemed to dawn unreasonably early. A hearty traditional breakfast was provided by the Hotel Moderne kitchen and the Jackasses stole a march on the rest by setting off first. Unfortunately, Kol reverted to type, and began swinging his compass again (*see The Ascent of Rum Doodle for detail*). We travelled in the wrong direction for 2 miles before retracing our tracks. Another warm-up thrown in at no extra cost. Unsurprisingly the Jackasses were the last to reach the halfway point at **Osny**. This is when the real fun started. The approach to **Paris** required careful handling. Unfortunately, Geraint came unstuck mounting a pavement and ended up lying on it. A local couple emerged from their house and enquired if he was OK. We assured them that he was fine and not to worry as he was in the company of a doctor. The local resident then declared that he was also a doctor and a case conference ensued. Some quick repairs resulted in Geraint remounting and proceeding with an impressive new gravel rash to add to his existing one.



An outbreak of gravel rash

We all converged on the **Arc de Triomphe** and somehow managed to get across the numerous lanes of chaotic traffic unscathed. A meander down the Champs Elysees to the Place de la Concorde was followed by the reformed Penguin Peloton arriving complete at the **Eiffel Tower**. After a celebratory

toast, the bikes were quickly 'boxed' and stowed in the bus and we were soon on our way home enjoying a very wholesome picnic en route.



The Penguins have landed

Ultimately, this was a fantastic experience for old friends (some very old) and new, uniting to raise over £47 000 to support the Penguins Against Cancer charity whilst enjoying outstanding weather, countryside, food, company and some free fitness training.

The Penguin Peloton would sincerely like to thank the following for their incredibly generous support:

GHRFC Supporters' Club for financial assistance to defray the cost of the student participants travel and accommodation

Babble for financial assistance to defray the cost of accommodation and transport for the non-student participants

Non-financial assistance was provided at no cost by the incredible:

Black Rats - Tony and Sasha Smith, ably assisted by Tom George

Paul Gillam (motorcycle outrider, shirt designer, photographer and filmmaker)

Trevor Kelly (Route Planner)

The Bus Party (Mick Martin, Charlotte Beardmore, Graham Hill, Immy Gush, Chris and Ann Howell, Pat Davis and driver Alan).

I would like to acknowledge that the Student members were refreshingly original in outlook throughout, and very tolerant of the opinionated fossils they were obliged to accompany for 3 days.

The Penguin Peloton:

Jackasses: Nigel White, Geraint Thomason, Charlie Beardmore, Roy Dixon, Graham Bevan, Al Mistlin (Day 1)

Chinstraps: Jamie Combes (Day 1 and 2), Pete Davis, Jez Worth, John Costello, Harry Costello, Rob Lancashire, Jamie Dunbar

Macaronis: Greg Ryan, Wayne Llewellyn, Lutz Hostert, Ben Challacombe, Tom Downie, George Tsolakaides

The Penguin Peloton cycle club has now applied to be affiliated to British Cycling and will ride again soon.

