

## Le Tour d'Anglesey 2011

The day dawned with Bethesda immersed in a miserable drizzle as we roused ourselves for the first Tour d'Anglesey. Phil had planned the route, keeping mostly to quiet country lanes: 100 miles around the island of Anglesey. As we ate our high calorie breakfast in the Achille Ratti hut the drizzle turned to steady rain. Conversation turned from ragging Jeff Lea about his first mountain marathon (Mandy and Jeff were putting their kit together for the RAB which was starting in Bethesda that morning) to the question of what kit to wear. At last, fully kitted out, we posed with our bikes for a group photo: Phil, Richard, Dave Makin, Dave Reynolds, Chris and Tash, Martin, Marcel and me.

The route took us to Bangor, over the Britannia Bridge onto Anglesey, and then followed a clockwise circuit of the island, taking in the South Stack Lighthouse visitor centre, Holyhead, Amlwch and Pentraeth, before returning to the mainland and back to the hut. Phil had programmed the route into his trusty GPS, attached to his crossbar by means of a high tech device which looked suspiciously as if it was made from a roll of electrical tape. To be honest, although we gave Phil a bit of stick when we went wrong a few times, the day would have been tedious without it: stopping to look at the map every 5 minutes. If you don't know Anglesey then make a date to go there. The coastal scenery is superb, and the island is criss-crossed with hundreds of narrow, almost traffic-free lanes.

The first hour or so was very wet and windy, and I was wondering how cold we might all be by the end of the day. There was talk of a weather forecast which had promised sun at 10 am. Needless to say, 10 am came and went, but by 11 the clouds were clearing and the sun was drying us out. The first stage went well, the peloton speeding past RAF Valley and Treardurr Bay, and we were in good time arriving at South Stack for lunch. The second stage, to Amlwch passed some tremendous coastal views and took in the superb Cemaes bay with its wide, sandy beach. There is not much going on in Amlwch itself, but down the hill is the fascinating Amlwch Port which was once a centre for copper exporting. We had tea and tiffin at the Heritage Centre overlooking the port, and prepared ourselves for the final stage. The last few miles on the island found some of us reaching into our energy reserves, but on the very steep climb out of Bangor it was clear a race was developing: it was only later I discovered it was a race for the first shower. Seeing the front riders make the break I summoned all my reserves and set off in pursuit. With a couple of miles to go I could see Dave (Makin) had dropped back a bit and I decided to try and catch him. Dave then looked back and saw me and I knew I was beaten, but I carried on pushing myself to the extent that I rode right past the front of the hut without realising. I then had an embarrassing 10 minutes cycling around the town trying to identify a road or building from the previous night's arrival in the dark. Eventually I found the hut and was last to arrive; not a very dignified ending to an otherwise awesome day.

I think we all did well, but my congratulations go to: Tash on her first, and very impressive century; Marcel on his first century, and for overcoming some early self-doubt; and Dave for insulting me more in one day than most people do in a year (and I had never met him before!).

Special thanks go to: Phil for the planning, and for guiding us round; and Richard for driving me to Wales, and for being generous with bread, butter, and jam.

I had a superb day and I feel I have made some great new friends. Roll on Le Tour d'Anglesey 2012.

Derek Donohue, Todmorden Harriers.