

Lifton Bikers

By Emma Bungay

In September 2016, a group of 8 men from Lifton put into use their eighteen months of training and set off on their John O'Groats to Land's End cycle ride for MND. The bikers were Luke Harris, Mike Wood, Martin Vanstone, Paul Davies, Malcolm Bird, Paul Arscott, Adam Pengelly and Alastair Batten. They were supported by "Uncle Nick" Horler, who followed in a support vehicle and helped with problems and punctures along the way.

The Lifton Bikers set off on Saturday 10th September and trickled down through the country, staying at local inns and sampling the local ale. Martin Vanstone, who organised and took part in the cycle ride, set out to raise money for the Motor Neurone Disease Association because his brother-in-law is living with MND and he has seen the speed at which the disease can progress. He wanted to do something big; something he would remember for years to come, and he found that 7 of his closest friends wanted to take part too.

The original aim was to raise £10,000, which seemed ambitious, and they held various fundraising activities prior to the bike ride to help reach their goal. The fundraising activities included a big breakfast, a bingo event and a rock concert. These were all very well attended and exceeded fundraising expectations. They decided that to help raise more for MND, they would gain sponsorship from local businesses and offer advertising space on their t-shirts. In the end, they had to turn away offers from some businesses out of lack of space on their shirts!

The Lifton Bikers stopped at Helmsdale, Muir of Ord, Fort William, Inverarnan, Larkshall, Annan, Burton in Kendal, Widnes, Ironbridge, Symonds Yat, Congresbury, Wellington, Lifton, Camborne and Land's End, the final stop. At each stop, they updated their blog to keep family, friends and supporters updated on their progress. The North Lancashire and South Cumbria branch of the MND Association greeted them at Burton in Kendal, which was a welcome surprise and helped to lift their waning spirits.

The Bikers continued to cycle the length of the country and came across various people who wanted to share stories of their experiences with MND. People were quick to put money into the bucket that Uncle Nick carried with him and it was later discovered that the collecting bucket was found to have raised £1,500 by the end of the trip. This served the dual purpose of raising awareness of the disease as well as raising funds.

The third to last stop was at their hometown and people came out in droves to support them. The local Ambrosia factory showed their support and the wives and partners of the bikers cheered them in. It was a very emotional time for the bikers, who had cycled hundreds of miles yet still had a way to go. The support and encouragement given that day was invaluable in ensuring they carried on to their final few stops. It was a welcome change for them to be able to stay at their own homes for the night, rather than to bunk in together at a hotel or inn.

The Lifton Bikers reached Land's End at approximately 12.20pm on 24th September, meaning that they took just 15 days to cycle from one end of Great Britain to the other. At Land's End over 50 friends, family, committee members and a local MP awaited the arrival of the Lifton Bikers, who cycled in with big smiles on their faces. Jeremy, Martin's brother-in-law, was amongst the hordes of people congratulating them on their achievement. As stated on their JustGiving page, "the best

part was seeing Jeremy at the finish line". Refreshments were organised for the bikers and their families, and they had their picture taken at the iconic signpost, to mark the end of their epic cycle ride.

The Cornwall branch held an open meeting on Thursday 20th October and 5 of the bikers were in attendance. Luke took to the stand with tales of their journey, and to inform attendees that the total amount raised so far is over £31,000, which was met with gasps and a big round of applause. The Lifton Bikers would like to thank their friends, family and supporters, both corporate and otherwise, for seeing them through this journey. Their fundraising has just begun, with talks already in place about their next big adventure!

At the time this article was written, Jeremy was in relatively good health however, he sadly lost his battle with MND on 15 November 2016. The Branch's thoughts are with his family and friends at this time.

[Editor note: Please find attached a photo of Jeremy Durrant with MP Derek Thomas.]