



Above: Peter's penny-farthing ride raised £15,000 for charity
Bottom: "On a bike, I leave my 'dementia monster' at home"

"We go cycling three or four times a week, a minimum of 50 miles a day," Peter adds. "Deb has said to me 'You can't give up cycling, because what will I do?' She wouldn't cycle where she does without me, and I wouldn't cycle the distances I do without her. Even if we drop down the mileage, we'll still go cycling. I can't just sit around and do nothing. It's important for people like me to have a purpose."

Getting back on the bike

Peter used to run his own timber business but now, like most people with dementia, doesn't work. Diagnosed with a progressively debilitating and ultimately terminal condition at the age of 50, he became depressed. Getting back on the bike was an important step, and he doesn't just ride locally. Last year he did a coast-to-coast, from Wales to Aldeburgh in Suffolk. "I did it to show people that life wasn't over with dementia," he says.

This year he rode 300 miles through Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Lincolnshire, and back into Norfolk over six days. His bike of choice? A penny-farthing. "I thought that would raise the bar a bit," he says. "Riding a penny-farthing, everybody wants to know what you're doing because it's different. People could donate £5 and cycle a mile, two miles, five miles, spend the day with us, or whatever. I was hoping that once people got out on their bikes, maybe in a couple of days' time they might go cycling again. It was to inspire people."

He also raised £15,000 for Young Dementia UK, a small charity that focuses specifically on early-onset Alzheimer's. He isn't sure exactly how the ride went ("From what I can recall, it went really well"), but it's clear from the videos on his Facebook page that he was at home on a penny-farthing.

"When I was a teenager, I used to race penny-farthings on indoor circuits," he explains. "There was a group of four of us who used to race in various local competitions on home-made things that we cobbled together."

"That's over 35 years ago. I hadn't ridden one on the roads for all those years. But as soon as I put my foot on the back step and scooted along, it was like I'd never been off one." ●

PETER BERRY

Early-onset Alzheimer's hasn't stopped Peter from cycling. Dan Joyce spoke to him about his 300-mile ride on a penny-farthing this year

Alzheimer's. Dementia. They're heavy words anchored to a set of preconceptions it's hard to shake – until you speak to Peter Berry. The 54-year-old Cycling UK member is articulate and engaging. He does public speaking. He's physically fit. The red flag is his short-term memory. Only hours after our conversation, he's forgotten it took place. Yet he's far from ready to release his grip on his handlebar.

"Cycling has always been a big part of my life," he tells me, "and it's something I do every day. It's something that I still can do. When I put the cycle helmet on, I become 'Peter the cyclist' and not 'Peter with dementia' – a normal guy on a bike. I leave my dementia – my dementia monster, I call it – at home."

Peter can no longer drive, so cycling is his independence. He lives a few miles from the nearest town, and the bus service is poor. "On a bike, you don't have to worry about where you're parking or where you're going because, if you're not really going anywhere, you can't really get lost," he says, matter-of-factly. "You're just going. We have some wonderful little rural lanes around here, and there's a great national cycle route – route one, for the coastal route."

Following the cycle route signs helps him navigate but he admits that he gets anxious when he's riding for any distance on his own. His solution is to cycle with a friend, Deb Bunt, who is present at the interview in case Peter needs a prompt.

Peter on TV

This year, Peter took part in the Channel 4 series, *The Restaurant That Makes Mistakes*. "The idea was to show employers that people like me still had something to give within the workplace." The producers recruited Peter after seeing his video blogs at [facebook.com/Peter-Berry-Living-with-Alzheimers-343350949556323](https://www.facebook.com/Peter-Berry-Living-with-Alzheimers-343350949556323)





Above: Andrew, Mabel, and Mr Blue on the Bournemouth prom
Bottom: Vacuum cleaner and dog to transport? No problem!

Tech Spec MR BLUE

- **Model:** Burrows 8Freight Black 10 modified to take a Bafang extra-torque mid-drive motor.
- **Frame & fork:** 7000 series alloy. Burrows signature monoblade fork and single-side rear axle.
- **Wheels:** Bombproof 20" ones wrapped with excellent Schwalbe Big Apple tyres.
- **Gearing:** Deore XT 10 speed
- **Brakes:** Suntour mechanical discs with Avid levers.
- **Steering & seating:** I plan to fit a Thorn MK2 comfort handlebar and Ergon GP5 grips and bar ends.
- **Accessories:** Bell. Some rather good Zéfal zip-tie water bottle mounts.

ANDREW COMBES

For hauling cargo – and a spaniel – around the Isles of Scilly, Andrew depends on Mr Blue: a Burrows 8Freight converted to electric assist

The Isles of Scilly are not large; St Mary's, the biggest, is less than seven square kilometres. Until he acquired a patch of land at the far end of the island, Andrew Combes could move cargo and tools around with a wheelbarrow. Finding himself with a longer regular journey, he needed a suitable bike.

"My old Moulton Standard wasn't up to carrying tools plus spaniel up the hill," he said, "and its brakes were not up to bringing firewood back down. I needed the bicycle equivalent of a wheelbarrow.

"After extensive research, I decided on a Mike Burrows 8Freight. But I also wanted a pedelec motor to help me up the hills, which is where it got complicated. You can't retrofit a Bafang extra-torque mid-motor to an 8Freight without taking an angle-grinder to the frame..."

Electrifying news

The good news was that someone was willing to attempt exactly that: 8Freight distributor Hugh Swire, in collaboration with Darren Williams of Brighton E-bikes.

"A prototype now existed," Andrew said, "but Hugh was having too much fun rattling around London on it with his two children on board, enjoying the freedom, range and absence of sweat that a bit of gentle electric assistance delivers.



"Fortunately the story did not end there. After 500 or so miles riding around the metropolis, Hugh offered 'Mr Blue' to me to buy, to continue test pilot duties in the world beyond London Town."

The only issue was how to get the e-cargo bike from London to Scilly. In the end, Andrew – along with Mabel the spaniel – went to collect it. "We then had an extended test ride back to Scilly: 450 miles on tiny roads, tracks, open moorland, and hoofing great hills, followed by a ferry trip.

"Mr Blue is now in daily service, carting Mabel and all manner of stuff around the island. The double-takes when people spot her in the back are priceless."

Transport of delight

Though he bought Mr Blue without riding it beforehand, it's now Andrew's favourite bike. "It rides like a conventional bike but can haul a ridiculous amount of cargo," he said. "I am an absolute convert to e-drive! Yes, some (possibly including Mike Burrows) will see e-drive as the work of 'dark forces', but when it comes to hauling heavy stuff it is a revelation.

"Electric assistance is also jolly handy when the tarmac runs out. It is like a gentle hand on the small of your back for the hills. The best feature is the two-legged prop stand operated from a lever on the handlebars. You only notice the weight when you stop, so it is great to have a stand (and parking brake) to prevent you ending up in an undignified heap."

Aside from intending to switch to a Thorn MK2 comfort handlebar, Andrew doesn't have any plans to upgrade Mr Blue further. He would, however, like to see an off-the-peg production version.

"Mr Blue is very much a prototype," he said. "Any production versions would need modifications to the lower section of the seat tube to allow the fitting of e-drive without having to resort to an angle grinder!" ●