



England

Land's End and back again

Barrie Bentley recalls a 1957 journey to and from England's south-western tip

JOHN HOLMES'S ARTICLE about his 1973 tour to and from Land's End [Sep/Oct issue] brought back fond memories of my own tour with a close pal, David Walker. Why did we make the trip? Well, in 1957 it was affordable and exotic.

If you asked anybody in Selby where they were holidaying it would likely be Filey, Brid(lington) or, if posh, Scarborough. People of a more adventurous turn would say Devon and Cornwall.

We obtained much advice on essential items to carry from members of Selby CC. We didn't take any advice about gearing. As can be seen from the photo, we did it on 66-inch fixed. There was much walking and cursing. I shudder at the thought now, even though we took only a saddlebag for essential clothes and spares for breakdowns. We stayed at youth hostels and B&Bs.

Our route down from Selby (and back) was on A-roads as traffic density was light in those pre-motorway days. I suppose we must have covered over 800 miles in 14 days. One incident that stands out was a crack developing in my headset. A gentleman at a garage in Salcombe repaired the crack by brazing it and only charged a shilling. He saved my holiday.

I now enjoy my e-cycling in relatively flat East Anglia with a delightful bunch of guys and gals from Diss CTC.

France

100k on the Canal du Midi

To mark his 80th year, **Geoffrey Hunt** rode a metric century alongside the French canal

We were staying in Cailhau in southern France, close to the Canal du Midi. It seemed an ideal starting point for a cycle challenge to mark my 80th year. Having had a heart by pass 13 years ago, I was thankful for the support of my cardiologist, my partner Hazel and some good friends.

I set off at dawn on 23 July to avoid the later heat. I'd packed plenty of food and water, as well as a copy of the Canal des Deux Mers guidebook. Riding my trusted Ridgeback tourer, I felt well prepared to have an enjoyable if difficult ride.

From Cailhau I rode to Bram, accompanied by the rising sun. It revealed the typical French countryside of sunflowers and grapevines. From Bram, I took the towpath towards Carcassonne, 40km from where I started.

I exchanged friendly words with boat people, walkers and other cyclists. The canal and Carcassonne are both World Heritage sites, Carcassonne being the second-most visited city in the south of France.

Reaching Trebes at the 50km point, a cycling friend appeared on the towpath and gave me an encouraging pat on the back. A tough 25km followed to Le Redort, with some walking due to bridges, cobbles and 15 locks to negotiate. Then it was a final push to La Somail at 95km, followed by my finishing point, Sallèles-d'Aude. Hazel was waiting there to take a photo and give me lots of congratulations. We then headed to the nearest cafe.

My favourite parts of the ride were pedalling through Carcassonne, reaching Trebes at half-way, toughing it out in the 35°C heat, and covering 108km in six hours and 52 minutes. It was a memorable experience and, at 80 years old, my first 100km ride in a day.



Right: Carcassonne, by Getty Images



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