

On Sept 10th 2023 at around 1-15 pm I rode my 621,371st recorded mile on a bike. What's so special about this? Well, if you convert to metric, it's one million kilometres! How do I know I've covered this distance?

A couple of years ago my old Coalville Wheelers team mate, John Quimby, said he was aiming to join the 300,000 miles club(1). He said he was sure that I would qualify and that I should also apply. This prompted me to go back through all my old diaries and add up everything I had recorded.

I started cycling at an early age. We didn't have a car until I was 16, so to travel it was either bus, train or bike, and for local journeys bike was the obvious choice. These local trips were unrecorded (so don't count in the grand total) and it wasn't until secondary school when I was introduced to Youth Hostelling that recording of longer journeys began. When I started racing in 1971, at the age of 19, I was encouraged by the club coach to record every ride, no matter how short. So I now have over 50 years of detailed mileage data, and can be sure that I have completed at least 1,000,000km.

My riding has been very varied: commuting to work, pleasure riding, touring, training and racing.

I have many significant memories, mostly good: watching incredible sunsets along the west coast of Scotland; riding through the South Downs in the early dawn after an all-night ride seeing the rolling hills emerging from the mists in the valleys like islands in an ocean; tackling the major Tour de France climbs in the Alps and Pyrenees. There have also been a few miserable experiences. One particular ride stands out. I had ridden from Loughborough to the Calder Valley in West Yorkshire to visit Hilary, (then my girlfriend, now my wife). The ride up on Friday had been fine and we had had a pleasant Saturday together. I awoke on Sunday to leaden skies and a threat of snow. But it was currently dry so I set off for the 100 mile ride home. The first 15 miles were fine, but then the snow started. As I climbed out of Huddersfield, the lying snow became deeper. By the time I reached the Woodhead road, the snow was clogging my mudguards and rear sprockets. I was only able to ride about ½ mile at a time before I had to stop and clear it. My gloves were wet, I was becoming colder and colder, I lost all feeling in my hands. As I passed the summit and descended towards Stocksbridge the snow became less intense, but I was now hypothermic. I stopped at the first house I saw and knocked on the door. I didn't have to say anything, they took one look at me - shivering violently, ice encrusted on my clothes and eyebrows - and took me in. They generously plied me with hot tea and toasted tea cakes. After an hour or so, I was getting back to normal and the snow storm had passed. They kindly provided me with industrial rubber gloves and I was able to resume the ride home. It all turned out OK, but on reflection it could have been life threatening.

I will move on to my racing career, as this article is written primarily for a racing cyclist audience. The next bit is data heavy, but as I often been asked 'How many races have you ridden?' 'How many have you won?' it might be of interest.

Most readers will know me as a time triallist. In total, I have ridden 1,646 time trials: 884 Open Events and 762 club events.

The total mileage in Open Events was 28,691. I rode 13 twelve hour events, 56 hundreds, 101 fifties and the balance in tens, twenty fives and assorted odd distances (hillys etc). I finished on the podium (first three) in 337 events (38%) including 146 wins (17%).

Club events accounted for 9408 miles, comprising mainly tens and assorted odd distances less than 25 miles. I 'podiumed' in 371 events (49%) including 274 wins (34%).

However, from the mid 70s to the mid 90s, I was equally keen on road racing, holding a 1st Category licence from 1973 to 1995. Elites had not been invented then. Domestically I rode 443 open events, totalling 30663 miles, an average event length of 69 miles. I finished in the top 6 (points scoring on the old BCF licence) in 238 events (54%), including 165 podiums (37%), broken into 67 wins, 60 seconds and 38 thirds. (If only I had been a better sprinter!)

Some of the above were stages in 2-day, 3-day and 4-day events. Of the 23 stage races ridden, the overall results were 17 (74%) top 6: 13 podiums (57%) (2 wins, 8 seconds, 13 thirds)

I rode for Great Britain in a few International Events in the 70s. A total of 31 stages, covering 2308 miles, an average of 74 miles/stage. However, I had found my limits. My best placing was 13th on stage 6 of the Tour of Europe 1979.

Again, I have many memories: winning the Tour of the Peak in 1977, arguably the hardest single day race in the UK; winning the season long Sheffield Star League in 1978; becoming National Veteran RR Champion in 1992 and winning the Peter Fryer Series in both 1992 and 1993. One anecdote concerns an intermediate sprint that I won in the Peace Race (Prague-Warsaw-Berlin) in 1976. The sprint prizes were chosen and donated by the towns hosting the sprint and were not declared in the race manual. The previous day the prize had been a motorbike. As I was way down on GC, and had no chances of a stage win, I thought it would be worth having a go. The sprint started to wind up about 10 km out with contenders for the overall points jersey becoming active. I positioned myself in the top 20 and struggled to hold my position. With 1km to go there was a slight lull in the action, as no one wanted to lead out. I took a flyer, opened a gap and went all out treating the sprint as my finish for the day. There was a hesitation in the bunch, I was clearly no threat and I just managed to hang on. What would my prize be? A motor bike? A small car?

No... six cut glass sundae dishes!

They were presented in an elaborate case at the race dinner that evening; it was one of the very few things that the GB team won. And the name of the town? Brezno in Czechoslovakia, and that is the source of my nickname on the Timetrialling Forum.

I no longer ride competitively, but get out on the bike most days, and will continue to do so as long as I am physically able. It's a great sport and a great pastime.

(1) Details of the 300,000 mile club can be found at <https://300k-cc.co.uk/>

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