

Graham Howse, Trevor Fleet and Danny Birdsall left Christie Park at 10.00 am on Saturday 3rd April with 158 miles ahead of them on the way to Lincoln still buzzing from the dramatic 4 – 3 win against Crewe the day before. In support in the first car was Helen Atkinson with map reader Anne Taylor and Ruth, Abigail and Hannah Fleet in the other vehicle. The triplet headed down Lancaster Road joining the cycle path on Westgate, briefly leaving it over Skerton Bridge before rejoining on Caton Road. The cycle path gave the boys opportunity to get comfortable on the bike and with the gear changes, on passing over the iron bridge before Halton they were pleased to see Dickie and Val Danson allowing them to pass. Once on the road at Caton the pace picked up with Rod Taylor also joining in support of the triplet. The first hour saw almost 12 miles clocked up as the bike passed through Hornby and on towards Melling. This road was very undulating and badly scarred with pot holes following the recent frost with Danny remarking it was like a roller coaster ride. The road then took them through Cantsfield and on through Burton in Lonsdale and the hills started to become a little steeper. A further stop after about 18 miles had Trevor recounting the trip so far to Radio Lancashire listeners. Also a little maintenance was required as Danny found cycling up the last hill his handlebars came away in his hand!

Onto the A65 and through Ingleton a hail storm bounced off all three cyclists helmets. And again passing by Clapham another burst of hail battered the boys. At 27 miles another stop at the hotel Graham and Trevor had stopped at by Settle 2 years earlier on the run to Bradford. Time for lunch and as before Graham pulled out a pork pie much to the dismay of sports doctor Fleet and sports nutritionist Birdsall. The A65 wended its way on towards Skipton and some tough hills to negotiate, the low gear was getting a bit more of a battering as the day went on. A stop just outside Skipton with 46 miles clocked had Graham, Trevor and Danny all reaching for some soothing cream for saddle sore back sides and Anne was on hand to take some rather unflattering pictures of the event. A long exposed stretch of dual carriage way climbed ahead of the cyclists away from Skipton followed by a long stretch of downhill past Chelker Reservoir, this presented the boys with an opportunity to coast and raise those increasingly sore bottoms out of the saddle. Helen in the support vehicle noticed that speeds on the bike exceeded 35 mph on this stretch as another break was taken at Ilkley, more sports drinks were taken on board with sports mixtures and wine gums. At 62 miles and having skirted Otley the cyclists were thrilled to only have another 4 miles to go, but the smiles quickly disappeared as those remaining miles were all up hill, no word were spoken it was head down as the pedals slowly and gradually cranked round and finally the hotel by Leeds / Bradford airport was reached. The Premier Inn staff were extremely helpful as the triplet was stored away in a conference room. Anne Taylor then set about massaging the 3 cyclist weary muscles before all sat down to re-fuel in the restaurant. Trevor fell instantly to sleep once his head hit the pillow, unfortunately Ruth, Abigail and Hannah were not so lucky listening to the guttural noises emanating from Trevor's nostrils. Dan slept well however Graham struggled a combination of stuffing his face in the hotel restaurant and the fact his left knee swelled up!

Day 2 and following breakfast, an inspection of Graham's knee followed by some anti inflammatories and the three set out again pleased to find a down hill run to begin with. A succession of roundabouts followed as they negotiated the A6120 ring road around Leeds ably guided by Helen and Anne in the support vehicle as the rest of the Fleet family visited family in the area. The second section of the day proved a little gruelling as they headed away from Leeds passing by the M1 which Trevor fancied a crack at but it was decided to leave it for now. As they progressed down the A563 the scenery began to change with the roads a lot more flat. The trio passed through the picturesque

village of Monk Fryston before stopping at Hambleton for lunch, the pace was much quicker than day one with as 90 miles in total were clocked up. After lunch the bike skirted Selby and then south on the A1041, 100 miles now completed but the wear and tear on the 3's rears was beginning to tell. The turn to go south resulted in a period of cycling into the teeth of a biting wind. Onwards they went through Carleton and Carleton Towers (no sign of Danny though) then on to Snaith. Once thorough Torne and its mini chicane which perked Trevor up a section of very boring flat straight road followed but at great pace with over 9 miles clocked up in 40 mins at one point, as the A18 guided the three towards Scunthorpe. A brief break followed before Scunthorpe's football stadium was in sight then on through Scunthorpe with of course a hill to finish, this included a deviation from the route when Trevor suggested it might be nice to try a bit of cycle path, not so thought Graham as they nearly fell off, almost hit a tree and narrowly avoided an oncoming car as they got back on the highway, we'll stick to the roads said Graham.

Once more the staff at the holiday inn in Scunthorpe were most helpful as the bike was stowed away in the laundry room before Anne got her massage table out once more to work on those weary limbs. The lack of hills on this section seemed to ease the swelling on Graham knee, 128.5 miles were now completed and day 2 was completed in a good 1 ½ hours quicker than day one despite only being 3 miles shorter.

It felt like the job was done as Graham, Trevor and unusually Dan decided to give the red wine a go in the hotel restaurant. All three slept well that night.

Day 3 and horrible weather conditions presented themselves, driving rain and wind as they set out on the final 28 miles to Lincoln. After leaving the A18 they turned onto the A15, what a boring long straight road! To add to the horrible weather, wind and rain, this major artery to Lincoln had a succession of heavy lorries getting ever closer to the cyclist as they slowly negotiated this last leg. With around 10 miles to go Graham had to seek refuge in Helen's car to warm his hands on the heater as all feeling had been lost hanging onto the handlebars to keep the bike straight on the road and into a freezing wind. The boys knew the end was in sight when a glimpse of Lincoln Cathedral could be seen in the distance, so they quietly proceeded head down and ate up the remaining miles to the outskirts of Lincoln. After a call to the team coach to establish its whereabouts the triplet negotiated the centre of Lincoln ands arrived at Sincil Bank, but where were the support vehicles, after 2 ½ days of flawless navigation, well apart from a couple of roundabouts that were negotiated twice, the girls couldn't find the road into the ground, all was saved when a steward guided them in and they arrived to see the boys with the team and directors having photo's taken.

Lincoln Football Club proved to be excellent hosts letting all 3 showers in the away dressing room before taking well deserved plaudits by both home and away fans on the pitch prior to the game. The bike was stowed away on the team coach and travelling home by car was agreed to be a better option.

Graham, Trevor and Dan would like to thank Helen and Anne for navigation skills and massages (Anne) and Ruth, Abigail and Hannah Fleet for support along the route, also Neil Philo for his companies T-4-3 Triplet Hire. The defibrillator has now been ordered with the kind support of Kerry at Northwest First Aid, so if anyone has any sponsor money to hand to the boys please do so as soon as you can!