



La Gazzetta

Newsletter of Rochdale CTC & the East Lancs Road Club



End to End Special June 2015

LE TOUR – EAST LANCS RC – BILBAO TO CALAIS SIX DAY CHALLENGE – 850 MILES

Introducing the Team Riders

ANDREW GORTON (Team Leader and Organiser – AKA “The Beast Master”)



Age 42
Height 5' 10"
Weight 12 Stone 7lbs

JASON CODLING (AKA Jay)



Age 46
Height 5' 10"
Weight 11 Stone 13lbs

SAMUEL WILSON (AKA Sammy)



Age 22
Height 5' 4"
Weight 11 Stone

PAUL MARSH (AKA Marshy)



Age 46
Height 5' 8"
Weight 13 Stone

**SHAUN LEONARD (AKA "The Fat Lad At The Back",
"Shaun Le Prawn" and/or "Uncle Fester")**



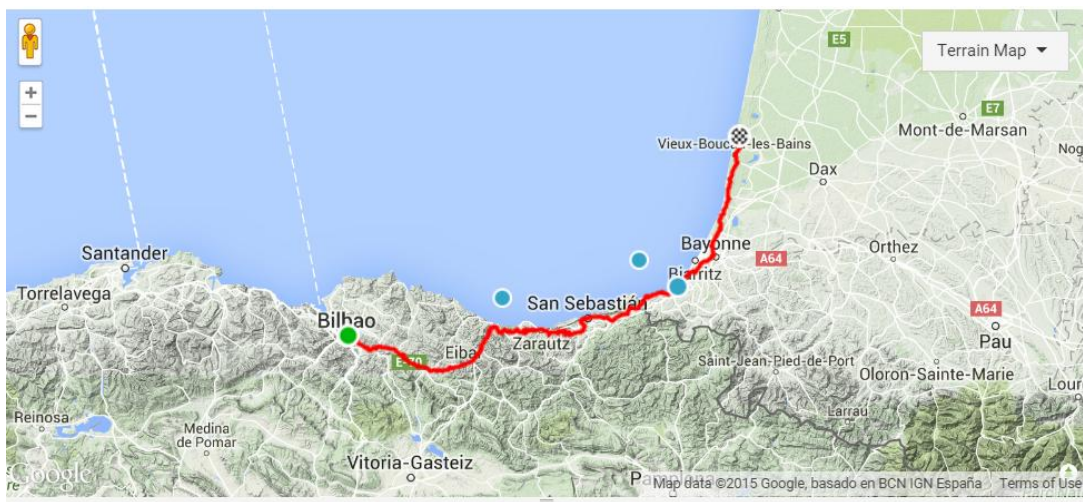
Age 49
Height 6' 0"
Weight 15 Stone 7lbs

The Beginning

Land Ahoy!.....Well this is it! 47 hours after leaving Andy's for the 4 hour journey to Portsmouth, we disembarked the ferry at Bilbao filled with trepidation and excitement, wondering what the next six days had in store for us.....



Stage 1 – Bilbao to Leon - 140 miles – 8,000 feet



With fresh legs and fully carbed up, we were raring to go and finally set off at 10.30am from Bilbao centre. Already late, we were going to have to seriously push on in order to get to our hotel before dark.

We headed towards San Sebastian, the heart of the Basque region in Spain. Pretty soon we've settled in to a reasonable pace, leaving Bilbao behind to head into the foothills of the Pyrenees, in what is billed to be the most challenging stage of all.

It wasn't very long (26.4 miles in, to be exact!) before we hit our first, albeit short, (yeah... short of breath!!) steep climb, which came in at a horrific 26.4% average. We made it to the top without too much fuss, but I knew I had pushed into significant, oxygen debt!! As the climb tapered off, I was greeted by poised Smartphone's, hoping to capture a Tommy Volcker-esk gurn or two!



I was starting to feel very worried at this point... I wasn't sure the Fat Lad At The Back would make it if the rest of the day's terrain was like that!!

We rolled into a small Basque village in search of a lunch venue. My Spanish can usually get me by, but the prevalence of the letter X in the Basque language had me foxed a few times whilst trying to relay what the Menu del Dia was. At our chosen lunch spot we almost all settle for the humongous three course pork dinner.... after which we only had 100 miles to go!!

Onwards and upwards.... after a short valley bottom drag, it was up to the next corner, followed by the next couple of corners and then one more..... Ahah...BUT....what goes up must come down! We can now see a long, and what looks to be a very smooth, very wide, winding descent. We pedal as fast as our respective gearing will allow. I tuck into the best aero position I could (and this one doesn't involve a chocolate bar!)

We are all heads down, backsides in the air, flying down in relatively close proximity.... clocking speeds of around 60 mph. Strava, via Garmin, had me at 61.9 mph, the fastest I have ever been on a bike! Yesssssssssss!! 😊

The route thereafter produced a succession of varied climbs, and for the most-part, the road hugged the fantastic coast road all the way to Biarritz, where we stopped for a quick sandwich at tea-time, before pushing on for the final 38 miles. After the previous calf busting, thigh burning lumps, navigation was fairly straightforward; all we really needed to do was to keep the sea on our left. The terrain finally petered out into flatter, rolling hills as we heading toward Leon.

We finally arrived at our hotel, missing our evening meal by 45minutes!! We couldn't quite hide the disappointment on our faces, but after a quick shower, and a quick meal at the local burger joint (beggars can't be choosers), spirits were lifted again just before Andy announced that we needed to be 'up and at 'em 'at 5.30am the next morning! "So, that will be in just over 5 hours" I said to Jay, as we snuggled down as first volunteers to share a double bed! I just hoped he didn't snore.

Andy G(East Lancs RC) – Ride 👍 44 💬 25

7:56 AM on Sunday, April 26, 2015
End to End France Day 6

127.0mi **7:55:28** **5,052ft** **168**
Distance Moving Time Elevation Extreme Suffer Score

180w **3,911kJ** **282** **57%**
Weighted Avg Power Total Work Training Load Intensity

Avg **Max** Show More
 Speed 16.0mi/h 48.1mi/h
 Elapsed Time 10:47:48

Device: **Garmin Edge 1000** Bike: —

TOP RESULTS View all

- 🏆 8th overall on [Côte d'Equennes \(par Taussacq\)](#) (5:18)
- 🏆 PR on [descente de Fienne](#) (5:47)
- 🏆 2nd fastest time on [Guines vers Pont du Marais de Guines](#) (3:39)

Jason Codling – Ride 👍 29 💬 15

9:26 AM on Tuesday, April 21, 2015
Le Tour day 1 bilbao to leon

142.3mi **9:42:16** **11,561ft**
Distance Moving Time Elevation

188w **6,579kJ**
Estimated Avg Power Energy Output

Avg **Max** Show More
 Speed 14.7mi/h 53.7mi/h
 Elapsed Time 11:48:18

Device: [Strava Android App](#) Bike: —

TOP RESULTS View all

- 🏆 3rd overall in 2015 on [Seignosse --> Messanges](#) (24:06)
- 🏆 3rd overall in 2015 on [Goierri](#) (8:03)

Paul Marsh – Ride 👍 13 💬 0

9:34 AM on Tuesday, April 21, 2015
A French adventure, Day 1

141.0mi **9:08:35** **10,057ft**
Distance Moving Time Elevation

178w **5,855kJ**
Estimated Avg Power Energy Output

Avg **Max** Show More
 Speed 15.4mi/h 40.7mi/h
 Elapsed Time 11:37:40

Device: **Garmin Edge Touring** Bike: —

TOP RESULTS View all

- 🏆 3rd overall in 2015 on [Goierri](#) (7:51)
- 🏆 5th overall in 2015 on [Seignosse --> Messanges](#) (24:05)

Sam Wilson (East Lancs RC) – Ride 👍 16 💬 3

9:35 AM on Tuesday, April 21, 2015
Bilboa to Leon

141.2mi **9:02:31** **6,804ft**
Distance Moving Time Elevation

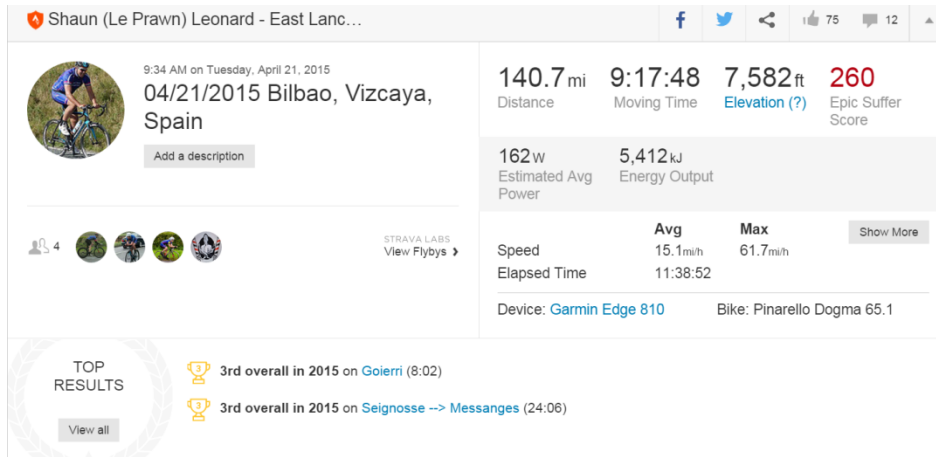
184w **4,729kJ** **367** **61%**
Weighted Avg Power Total Work Training Load Intensity

Avg **Max** Show More
 Speed 15.6mi/h 52.1mi/h
 Elapsed Time 11:36:04

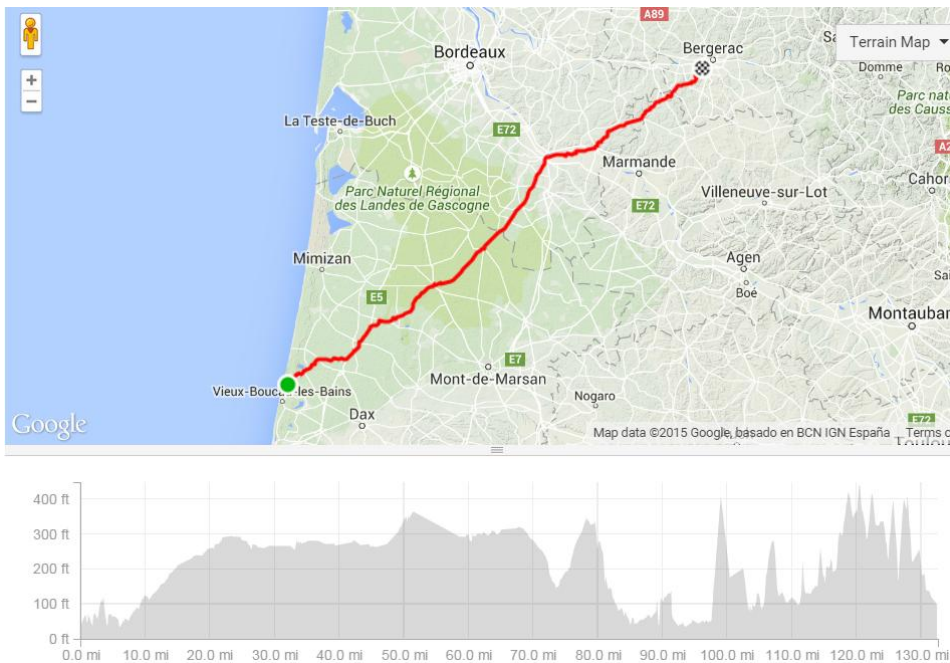
Device: **Garmin Edge 800** Bike: **Bh G6**

TOP RESULTS View all

- 🏆 3rd overall in 2015 on [Seignosse --> Messanges](#) (24:01)



Stage 2 – Leon to Bergerac – 132 miles – 5000 ft



Its 5.18am and Andy’s been up for a while....just a couple more minutes in bed, I think....please?

I hear a few moans of aches and pains reverberating through the chalet....at least I’m not alone!?

After glugging down our porridge pots, we were off again. A bit of a chilly start to what we thought would be a relatively flat and traffic-free route!!

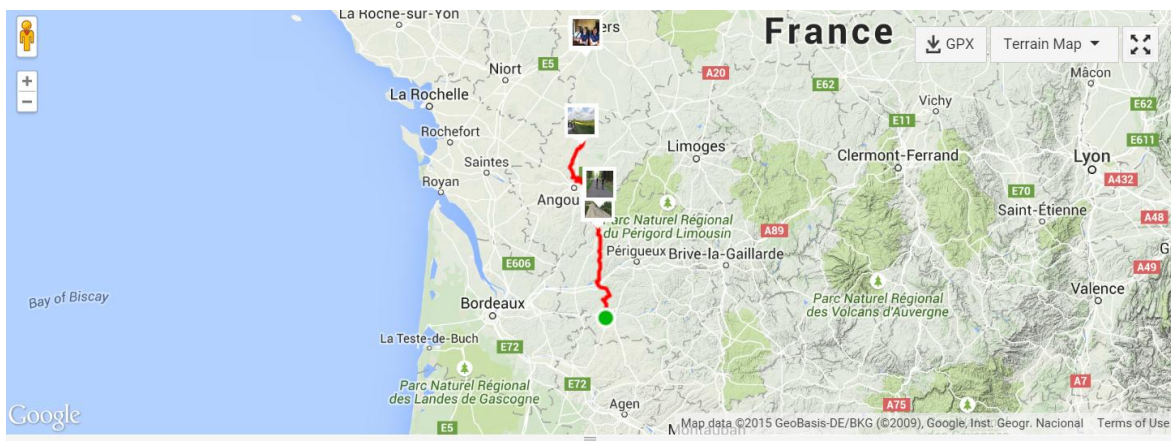


Once we got back into our stride we had a fairly easy morning ride, stopping for lunch in Langon. Fully carbed up, we seemed to struggle through the second part of the ride. We were rolling up and down and down and up through the Bordeaux region of France it was very tough going and certainly not the flat terrain we were expecting and hoping for!



After nine hours in the saddle, we arrived at the hotel in Bergerac, feeling like our bikes were actually an anatomical extension of our bodies!

Stage 3 – Bergerac to Poitiers – 150 miles – 4,600 Ft



Oh my life...finally... a hotel that served a cooked breakfast! After eating our fill, and some more, we set off at around 7am into the cold rain. It rained for the first three hours solid, it was really tough going along this stretch and everyone had quietened down. I know my demons came to visit me that morning..and stayed with me until we found a local patisserie. After fuelling up in sugar heaven our spirits were lifted again!!

This particular day seemed to be plagued with Garmin detours sending us on wild goose chases up mountain bike trails and through famers fields!



With no lunch in sight, tough terrain, and block headwinds, we struggled on, dragged along by Andy's relentless pace at the front. Eventually, by late afternoon, we had arrived at Angouleme in the Charente region. Unfortunately, Eamon, our support driver, was nowhere to be found. Reluctantly we opted for a quick junk food fix (KFC) followed, in my case, by several double espressos, before setting off for the afternoon slog.

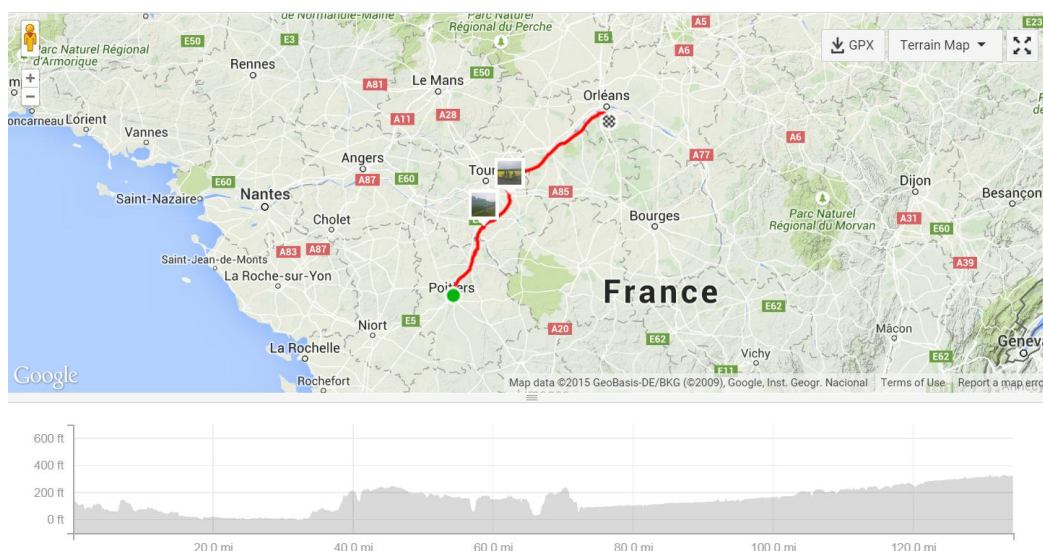
With long flat, straight roads ahead draped on either side with endless yellow rapeseed fields, akin to scenes often seen in the Tour De France, I seem to get my 116th wind. Eager to pay back the lads with a stint on the front, I proceeded to wind it up, in what has since been hailed as "Shaun's Hogwarts Espresso". I managed to ramp proceedings up to the 26 mph mark for a few miles.

All I can remember are the shouts from the rear, which I thought were words of encouragement along the lines of...that's it....crank it up!? It transpires they were actually calls to knock it down a peg or two... but not put quite as politely!! Alas, a little further on and my time at the front was over climb ahead!



Before we knew it stage 3 had drawn to a close and now it was all about getting as much food, ibuprofen and paracetamol in to our systems as possible and as much sleep as time would allow, in an attempt to recover and heal the many sores upon sores! Ouch!! ☹️

Stage 4 – Poitiers to Orleans



Another cold 6.30am start. Jay and Andy had devised a route planning method which worked a treat and avoided the previous days confusing Garmin diversions.

This day just seemed to be about a roller coaster of emotions, highs, lows, pain, pain and more pain. Thighs, calves, groin, back, neck, wrists....it goes on.

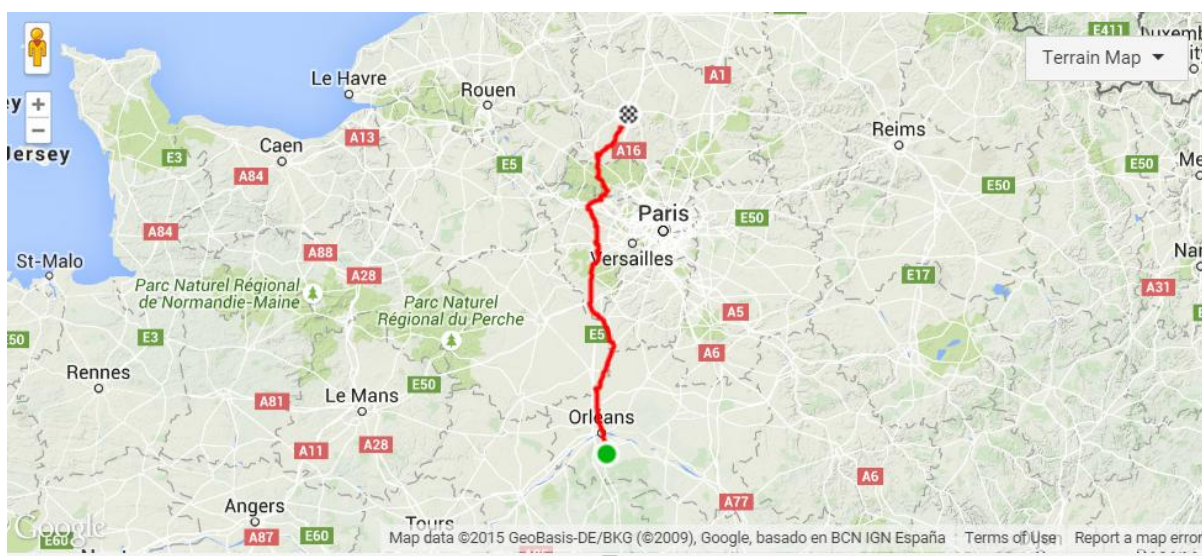
Andy took the lead once again, setting a great pace at the front.....not once faltering.....riding to power. He was a dream to follow; he knew exactly what power to put out to make sure we could all stay together at the optimal speed. Jay, Sam, Andy and Marsh all had a few digs along the way, picking up imaginary intermediate sprint and KOM points which helped to break up the days many miles.

Arriving into Orleans early evening, we marvelled at the beautiful run in along the River Loire.



We focussed on getting clothes and kit washed and getting as much food and drink down as possible before hitting the sack. Ah heaven...a single bed! I shoe-horned it into the wardrobe in the hope it would act as some sort of acoustic enclosure to help stifle the now relentless resonating nasal and flatulent vibrations from my fellow teammates!!

Stage 5 – Orleans to Beauvais



Did I mention the pain? Oh please.... I don't think I can face another day on the bike! Sentiments I know that were echoed by most of the team.

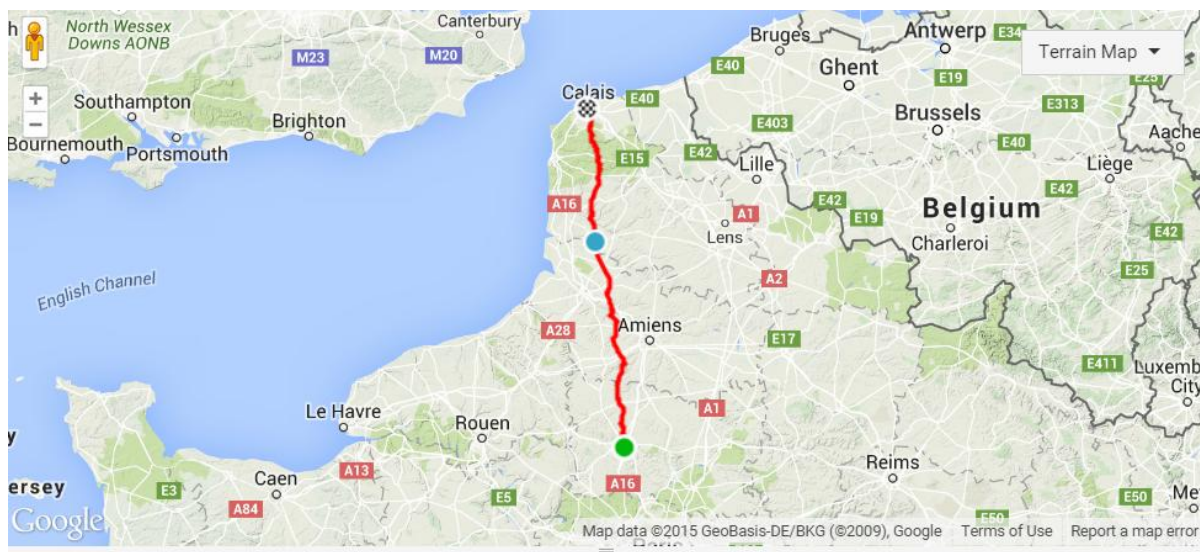
At this point imagine the scene of grown men crowded around Andy's Team Van, delving into their respective kit bags to apply copious, in fact, obscene amounts of Chamois cream to their nether regions in an attempt to cushion

themselves from further chaffing...after all...exposed bone was the next step...or at least that's what it felt like to me!!

Mentally, I think we were all thinking we'd almost done it. It was the second to last day; we knew that at the end of this stage we would be carried to the end, perhaps on adrenaline, elation... who knows. These are the things your positive mind says to you to rationalise getting to the finish line.



Stage 6 – Beauvais to Calais



Just like in the Tour De France, the final run into Paris, or in our case, the run into Calais, was treated as a foregone conclusion, with a very jovial start to the day indeed.

However getting to the end would be far from a formality! After already completing over 700 gruelling miles, to be faced with what you can see in the stage profile meant that our final frontier was pretty daunting.

This one felt very long indeed, but spirits remained high... until we missed an important water refill stop. I had to nick everyone's last dregs of juice to try to keep me running until we stumbled upon our next oasis.

Let's face it; I'm not as efficient on the bike as my fellow teammates. Forgetting about the more commonly used power to weight ratio and looking at water consumption, I was only managing 35 miles on 1.5 litres of water/electrolyte...by my reckoning that's only 105 MPG!! Conversely, Andy, Sam, Jay and Marsh were averaging around 175 MPG, assuming (worst case) that their 500ml bottles were empty at each 30 – 35 mile support stop. I know for a fact that most had a little fluid left in the tank whereas I usually had none. Andy clearly topped the charts on this metric, at a stratospheric MPG efficiency of over 210 MPG!

Well, by the time I had finished doing the maths, we'd covered another 65 miles. It was time for lunch, after which Jay said, in a very jubilant voice..."Hey, we've ONLY got another 70 miles to do!!?" Funnily enough, everybody was uplifted by the fact! When would one every say such a thing and actually be happy with 70 miles to go??? I guess only if you'd covered the sort of mileage we had, in such a short space of time.

We are in the final throws.... 30 miles to go then my front mech goes down...no power...then the rear mech fails...its the Di2 battery.. its flat! Andy offers his battery but we realise it's the wrong type. I insist that everyone go ahead and that I'd make it in my own time stuck in 39 x 17. But, Sam the Man kindly offered his battery to me, before disconnecting it, he chose a gear he was happy to complete the journey to our final destination - Calais. What a hero!

Off Sam tramped, in his fixie, at what seems to be an incredible 140+ RPM cadence!

We are now on a hill top looking down into Calais...the final descent is long, cold and quite windy.



We arrive at the ceremonious Calais sign after dropping like stones and have a quick photo stop to mark the end of a truly epic journey that brought together five clubmen who gelled famously from day one, and who supported one another through many physical and emotional ups and downs.



Andy G(East Lancs RC) – Ride 👍 44 🗨️ 25

7:56 AM on Sunday, April 26, 2015

End to End France Day 6

👤 4 STRAVA LABS View Flybys

127.0mi	7:55:28	5,052ft	168
Distance	Moving Time	Elevation	Extreme Suffer Score
180w	3,911kJ	282	57%
Weighted Avg Power	Total Work	Training Load	Intensity
	Avg	Max	Show More
Speed	16.0mi/h	48.1mi/h	
Elapsed Time	10:47:48		
Device: Garmin Edge 1000		Bike: —	

TOP RESULTS View all

- 🏆 8th overall on Côte d'Equennes (par Taussacq) (5:18)
- 🏆 PR on descente de Fienne (5:47)
- 🏆 2nd fastest time on Guines vers Pont du Marais de Guines (3:39)

Jason Codling – Ride 👍 26 🗨️ 15

7:55 AM on Sunday, April 26, 2015

Le Tour Day 6 Beauvais to Calais challenge complete

👤 4 STRAVA LABS View Flybys

127.3mi	8:02:59	5,469ft	209
Distance	Moving Time	Elevation	Extreme Suffer Score
128w	3,716kJ		
Estimated Avg Power	Energy Output		
	Avg	Max	Show More
Speed	15.8mi/h	48.3mi/h	
Elapsed Time	10:48:23		
Device: Garmin Edge 810		Bike: —	

TOP RESULTS View all

- 🏆 2nd overall in 2015 on Route Nationale (Nouvion -> Forest-Montiers) (1:57)
- 🏆 3rd overall in 2015 on Col de Nouvion (1:45)
- 🏆 4th overall in 2015 on Fond de Thieuloy (10:59)

Paul Marsh – Ride 👍 13 🗨️ 8

7:56 AM on Sunday, April 26, 2015

Day 6, A French Adventure.

👤 4 STRAVA LABS View Flybys

127.5mi	8:12:30	4,975ft	
Distance	Moving Time	Elevation	
127w	3,749kJ		
Estimated Avg Power	Energy Output		
	Avg	Max	Show More
Speed	15.5mi/h	48.3mi/h	
Elapsed Time	10:48:04		
Device: Garmin Edge Touring		Bike: —	

Sam Wilson (East Lancs RC) – Ride 👍 37 💬 12

7:57 AM on Sunday, April 26, 2015
Day 6 Beauvais - Calais. Finished!!!!

127.1 mi **7:56:28** **5,528 ft**
Distance Moving Time Elevation

191 w **4,321 kJ** **353** **64%**
Weighted Avg Power Total Work Training Load Intensity

4 STRAVA LABS [View Flybys](#)

	Avg	Max	Show More
Speed	16.0mi/h	46.3mi/h	
Elapsed Time	10:47:11		

Device: [Garmin Edge 800](#) Bike: [Bh G6](#)

TOP RESULTS [View all](#)

- 🏆 8th overall on [Côte d'Equennes \(par Taussacq\)](#) (5:23)
- 🏆 3rd overall in 2015 on [Route Nationale \(Nouvion -> Forest-Montiers\)](#) (1:55)
- 🏆 3rd overall in 2015 on [Col de Nouvion](#) (1:40)

Shaun (Le Prawn) Leonard - East Lanc... 👍 69 💬 16

7:59 AM on Sunday, April 26, 2015
Stage 6 - Beauvais to Calais - The Finish! 04/26/2015 Beauvais, Picardie, France

126.9mi **8:15:55** **6,201 ft**
Distance Moving Time Elevation (?)

149w **4,438 kJ**
Estimated Avg Power Energy Output

4 STRAVA LABS [View Flybys](#)

	Avg	Max	Show More
Speed	15.4mi/h	45.6mi/h	
Elapsed Time	10:44:55		

Device: [Garmin Edge 810](#) Bike: [Pinarello Dogma 65.1](#)

TOP RESULTS [View all](#)

- 🏆 10th overall on [Grandvilliers - Poix de Picardie](#) (24:22)
- 🏆 2nd overall in 2015 on [Route Nationale \(Nouvion -> Forest-Montiers\)](#) (1:53)
- 🏆 3rd overall in 2015 on [Col de Nouvion](#) (1:42)

After completing 850 miles at 15.8 mph average speed and ascending almost eight vertical miles in altitude, it was time to find the final hotel to drink a well deserved beer (or two)

Personally, I wouldn't have missed this experience for the world. It was physically and mentally the most challenging thing I have ever done in my life...that's a sentiment echoed by most.

Would I do it again? ...NO!! But I'm happy that I have done it, and feel very privileged to have shared the experiences and accomplishment with four incredible, talented men and friends!

Shaun Leonard