

A CHAIN REACTION

By AMY HUNT

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Cyclist's 210-mile cross-country ride

HORIZONTAL rain, driving winds and bog-like peat were not enough to stop one madman cyclist fulfilling his dream.

Richard Rothwell, 38, took on the challenge of a lifetime, cycling a 210-mile coast-to-coast route without stopping.

And he managed the epic feat, which he believes no-one else has ever completed in one sitting, in 28 hours 31 minutes.

Because of the terrible weather Richard, from Morpeth, had to let go of his dream to finish the route in less than 24 hours.

But he was nonetheless delighted to get to the end of the route, which goes from St Bees to Robin Hood's Bay, through the Lake District, Yorkshire Dales, and North York Moors, with no injuries and no mechanical failures.

He said: "The conditions were absolutely horrific, with blasting head winds and pouring rain.

"It was the hardest thing I have ever done, but it was fantastic. I was so lucky that nothing went wrong because the potential for disaster was huge. But it went better than could be

expected considering the conditions.

"Even though the time isn't what I wanted I'm still really pleased because I rode as well as I could in the weather conditions."

Richard commutes by bike from his home in Morpeth to work in North Shields, a daily round trip of 40 miles and even goes to meetings on his bike.

Though he has long used cycling as a means of getting about, Richard's competitive streak has only emerged in the last few years.

He has rapidly moved up the ranks of the sport's elite and now takes part in endurance mountain bike races ranging from 10 hours up to 24 hours.

In July he will compete in the 24-hour solo World Championships in the Canadian Rockies and has been training with a coach to build his stamina.

He completed the Coast to Coast, which is based on Wainwright's gruelling walking route rather than the modern C2C cycle route, as part of the Seven

Deadly Spins, a series of national 24-hour challenges dreamed up by Richard and endurance race pals Rob Lee and Dave Buchanan.

On his route he was tracked using a GPS system, so people could follow his progress on the internet, although for the first 10 hours he unwittingly rode alone after he accidentally switched his tracker off while putting a bottle of chain oil in his bag.

And the course was not without its challenges.

Richard had to ride through the night, in treacherous conditions, wading through thigh-deep peat, dodging tree stumps and rocks, all the time dragging his bike with him and hurling it over walls and gates.

He said: "I nearly pulled out at one point to be honest, but I decided to carry on because training-wise I couldn't do it any other way with the worlds coming up.

"It was just plain ridiculous, but I enjoyed it. I might try again next year once I've got over the shell-shock."



AWFUL CONDITIONS: Richard Rothwell cycled from coast to coast



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Old comrades

TODAY

Noon, Newcastle Branch, WRAC/ATS Assn, Companions Club, Leazes Park Rd, Newcastle.
7.30pm, Northumbria Branch, British Korean Veterans Assn, Companions Club, Leazes Park Rd, Newcastle.

TOMORROW

Noon, Newcastle Branch, Normandy Veterans Assn, Companions Club, Leazes Park Rd, Newcastle.
12.30pm, Newcastle and District Fepow Assn, Newcastle Companions Club, 45 Leazes Park Rd, Assoc.
8pm, Tyne Branch, R Naval Assn, Companions Club, Leazes Park Rd, Newcastle.

MONDAY

7.30pm, Sunderland Branch, Combined Services Assn, R.E's Club, Roker Ave, Sunderland.

TUESDAY

8pm, Newcastle Branch, Royal Engineers Assn, TA Centre, Debdon Gardens, North Heaton, Newcastle.

WEDNESDAY

Noon, Tyne Tees Branch, Intelligence Corps Assn, Central Legion Club, West Jesmond Ave, Newcastle.
7.30pm, North East Branch, RMP Assn, TA Centre, Sandyford Rd, Newcastle
(Apr/Jun/Aug/Oct/Dec/AGM) or TA Centre, Norton Rd, Stockton (Mar/May/Sept/Nov).
8pm, Gateshead Branch, Royal Naval Assn, Royal British Legion, Coatsworth Rd, Gateshead.
8pm, Newcastle Branch, RAOC Assn, Royal British Legion, Newcastle Central Club, 3 West Jesmond Ave, Jesmond, Newcastle.

NEXT THURSDAY

Noon, Newcastle Branch, Normandy Veterans Assn, Companions Club, Leazes Park Rd, Newcastle.
7.30pm, Household Cavalry Club, North East, TA Centre, Gilesgate, County Durham.
7.30pm, Durham Branch 1940 Dunkirk Veterans Assn, Eldon Arms, Ferryhill Station.
7.30pm, Royal Marines Assn, Royal Marines Reserve Unit, Anzio House, Quayside.