

Lands End - John O'Groats bike mileage on Zwift. 4 days. 867.2 miles.

In Memory of Gary Dench

My twin brother, Gary, was a Master Wood Carver, who had worked on Windsor Castle after the fire, and on many other important artefacts. He was a successful antiques dealer buying and selling things to restore and sell on. He was a fast runner, having completed the London Marathon on 5 occasions (pb 2:52) as well as many other races over the years. He was a great trials bike rider. He was fit, bright, witty, funny, determined, a good person, the sort of person who seemed to have it all worked out.

Early in March 2017, Gary, received some news which floored him, he had Non Hodgkins Lymphoma. For whatever reason Gary just could not accept he had this thing inside him which he had no control over. It played on his mind night and day, and in the end his mind broke. It was heart breaking for us all to see the vitality, spirit, love, laughter, fun, and fitness seep away with only fleeting glimpses returning of the Gary we all knew.

Gary suffered long periods of severe depression and mental health breakdown over the last 4 years. Much of his last years of life were spent housed in mental health units where medications, talking therapies and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) had little success in dealing with his anxieties.



The one thing this has taught me is to never underestimate the fragility of the human mind. This was not meant to happen to Gary. He was strong, fit, healthy, and successful and had everything to live for and fight for, but something inside his head switched off the day he heard that horrible C word.

I've chosen Mental Health Research UK to raise money for, as it wasn't really the cancer that ruined Gary's life over the last 4 years, it was his inability to process that diagnosis in a rational manner which impacted so negatively on his life. No treatments seemed to work for Gary, which is why I'm supporting more research for more effective understanding and treatments.

Gary passed away on 5th December 2020, and he is finally at peace.

In 2011 me and my mate Woody, cycled from Land's End to John O'Groats in 4 days. We raised money for Marie Curie after they'd cared for my Dad, who died suddenly of a brain tumour. It remains the hardest physical challenge I have done, We joked at times about doing it again, maybe on the 10th anniversary of the ride.....

So, the 10th anniversary is now here, and it coincides with yet another heart breaking death in my family. I cope with many things by riding my bike a lot, so why should now be any different!



In these strange times of lockdown, it's not something I see being possible any time soon in the real world, As a result, I'll be doing the ride distance in the virtual world of Zwift, and my aim is to match the mileage of each of the 4 days we rode back in 2011.

Day 1 Lands End to Monmouth 226.12 miles

Day2 Monmouth to Penrith 225.26 miles

Day 3 Penrith to Rannoch Moor 198.96 miles

Day 4 Rannoch Moor to John O'Groats 216.22 miles

Total mileage 867.2 miles

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Ady Dench

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