

Coast to Coast the long way round!

Paul Blackburn's 1001 mile journey from Land's End to John 'O' Groats was not the first epic journey he had embarked upon; but Paul wanted to personally thank the people who had helped him through one of his most difficult. A journey that achieved much more than Paul expected.

Back in August 2007, Paul Blackburn was very unexpectedly diagnosed with a rare type of head and neck cancer after having undergone a minor operation.

As a result of the diagnosis he had to undergo a further operation and then six weeks of aggressive radio and chemotherapy. The treatment was very unpleasant and the side effects horrendous and long lasting - he is still recovering from some of the associated side effects today.

he decided during the treatment that he wanted to give something back to the people who helped him and his family through the difficult times they had undergone. The people who he wanted to repay mostly were Macmillan Cancer Support.

From the moment that he was diagnosed they were there 24/7, and still are. But it was not just what they did for Paul and his family - he witnessed how hard they work on a daily basis whilst at the hospital and just how attentive and supportive that they are to cancer sufferer's and their families.



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So it was with that in mind that Paul decided that he would ride from Land's End to John O Groats in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support and with this set his start date as being 31 May 2009. That was the easy bit. Amongst many other logistical things that he had to arrange - accommodation and en route mobile support was going to be the most difficult, so he sent an email around his colleagues in Northumbria Police outlining the intended itinerary and asking for any support that they could offer.

It was then that Bryn Jones came into Paul's plans. Bryn forwarded my email around his colleagues in the International Police Association and it wasn't long before Paul had several contacts from IPA members in Scotland offering assistance with accommodation, mobile support and even arranging food and drink en route.

In Paul's words, "that doesn't sound like much but believe me - it made a huge difference to how things could have been and without the kind help of IPA colleagues my journey would have been a far more difficult one and I would have struggled a lot more than I did".



In particular, Paul, would like to mention the following IPA members who set aside their own time to help him on his bike ride :

Steven Lillie from Lothian and Borders, who provided mobile support, food, drinks and transportation of luggage between Langholm and Edinburgh.

Yvonne McGreggor (Secretary of Tayside Branch of IPA) and her husband David who arranged accommodation, meals, mobile

support for me between Edinburgh to Auchterarder and the following day en route to Braemar.

In summary, Paul met a lot of people during a two week ride of 1001 miles, but the memories that he will always fondly remember are those of his new found IPA colleagues who so unselfishly extended the hand of friendship out to him.

As a new member of the IPA, he is looking forward to making many more friends.