

Big Bike



Table pedal power smashes Guinness WORLD RECORD

They call it Cyclops, the monster - more bus than bike; more bulk than any bus. An eye-popping, blood pumping, muscle wrenching, heart breaking fantasy machine, so big they built it in three parts.

Put the monster on a runway - a big runway, crew her with a legion one-hundred strong and pray the chain takes the strain. At the signal the riders bend to the task; the monster begins to move; mass gathers momentum. Cameramen, like pilot whales around a leviathan, backtrack to capture the moment as Cyclops accelerates down the runway and into the history books.

It's September 22, 2007 at Duxford Airfield, Cambridge, where Douglas Bader once led his own winged cohorts into the sky; and it can only happen in Round Table: The Guinness



Book of Records and eye-popping charity sponsorship into the bargain.

But that's just for openers: next day Cyclops, or at least her business front end, has another mission, this time in the heart of the metropolis at the invitation of Mayor Ken Livingstone. The 'big bike' is 'Freewheeling 4 London' to help promote cycling in the City.

Essex Odyssey

Twelve days later, on October 4, the low loader is on the road again, and this time to take the 'big-bus-come-pedal-thing,' as she's affectionately dubbed, to the third and most momentous stage in her epic trilogy, a road ride from Norwich, birthplace of Round Table, to Great Dunmow in Essex.

Teams of volunteers from Table, 41 Club and Circle, along with friends and family and many volunteers and well wishers, turned out to provide support and ensure that there was enough pedal power for the weekend Odyssey, a massive combined effort by Area 6 and Area 33.

Waved away by the Mayor of Norwich the first crew hit challenges from the outset, not least extricating themselves from city centre traffic unused to sharing the Queen's Highway with a cycle-powered monster.

The evening staging post was Suffolk Golf Club at Fornham All Saints - a blessed haven for the

exhausted riders. But next morning, with fresh legs aboard, including a contingency from Norwich Castle Round Table, Cyclops made stately and steady progress towards Dunmow - until grounding on a hump-backed bridge more appropriate for horse and cart than a mega-cycle!

But if hearts and legs were flagging in the final miles into Great Dunmow town centre the crowds that turned out to cheer made it all worthwhile.

What had started when Shaun Pledger laid down the Great Dunmow and District RT768 Chairman's Challenge ended in triumph: superb membership-boosting publicity for Round Table, a massive scoop in charity fundraising and a world record snatched from an 82-seater Swedish machine.

Shaun's own company, Alloy Fabweld at Great Dunmow, provided the engineering expertise to design and build the monster. But before you could say 'big bike' the gauntlet had been picked up, not only by Chairman Keith Spurway and the members of Norwich RT1, but by almost all the Round Tables and 41 Clubs across Areas 33 and 6.

According to Area 6 Media and PR Officer, Des Fulcher (Harleston RT 942), of the massive £35,000 of sponsorship pledged over the course of the three events, £6000 has already been donated to the East Anglia Children's Hospice and £5000 to the Little Haven Children's Hospice, in line with the National President's chosen charity for 2007-2008.



Back to Great Dunmow in triumph... and they must have been tired because they pedalled straight past the pub! Below: East Anglia Children's Hospices were one of the first beneficiaries of a fundraising masterstroke.



London Mayor Ken Livingstone turns out to greet Cyclops and Round Table in the heart of the City of London (Did we pay the congestion charge!?!?)



ULTIMATE WINNERS: The 'Big Bike Challenge' brought benefits all round, but the final payoff has come back to Round Table. It was hard work at times, but fun and fellowship doesn't get much better than from the raw, sore saddle of the cycle of the century!

Pic: Cyclops in the making at Alloy Fabweld at Great Dunmow.