

Oldest E2E cyclist

PETER LANGFORD

At the age of 90, Cycling UK member Peter Langford became the oldest cyclist to complete the End to End. Jennifer Young spoke to him

Many members of Cycling UK have undertaken the challenge of the End to End: riding from the UK's southern tip at Land's End to the northernmost point of John o' Groats. For Peter Langford, arriving at the famous John o' Groats signpost in September had special significance. Not only was it the fourth time he had completed it but he did so at the age of 90, becoming the oldest known End to Ender!

Retired vicar Peter, from Beccles in Suffolk, considers it his most enjoyable trip yet, thanks to the combination of support from family and friends, the kindness of strangers and favourable weather.

Peter's first LEJOG was at the age of 75, when he raised £25,000 for Ringsfield Hall Trust, a residential centre for church and school groups, which he set up with his wife Sally in 1972. Peter completed the ride despite discovering that his bike was not really up to the job. "It was quite an old bike with inadequate gears and too wide a saddle that made my backside very sore," he said. "It was a relief when I had to get off on steep hills and could give my bottom a rest! As I went along I kept muttering to myself, 'never again!'"

However, five years later, with extra gears and a better saddle, Peter was back, raising more money for charity in the process. Then in 2018, at the age of 85, Peter rode LEJOG for a third time, once again raising funds for charity and benefitting from a new bike with much better gears. And once again he vowed that it would be the last time – although his family suspected otherwise. "Sure enough, I was tempted as I approached 90 to have one more go!" he said. "I decided to do it in aid of the homeless."

Riding nearly 3,500 miles in training at the start of the year prepared Peter well for the road ahead. He was also supported on the ride by family and friends – the highlight of the trip for him.

"Getting to spend time with my family and friends made this trip the most satisfying and fulfilling of all four. They



This was Peter's fourth E2E. He also rode it aged 75, 80 and 85
Below: Leaving Innerleithen, en route to Edinburgh

carried my panniers between them almost all the way. I had time with each of my three children, two of whom cycled with me for parts of the route, along with two of my three granddaughters [one of whom is expecting Peter's first great grandchild] and their husbands."

The support of strangers was another highlight of the trip, with many people donating after spotting Peter's eye-catching, bright yellow T-shirt emblazoned with 'Land's End to John o' Groats at age 90 in aid of the homeless'. Peter said the T-shirt was "worth its weight in gold!" From people handing him money through car windows, to a woman who secretly paid for brake repairs, to the owner of a bed and breakfast who provided accommodation and a meal for free, Peter feels huge gratitude for the kindness he experienced. He has now raised over £40,000 of the £50,000 target for the Salvation Army and Access Community Trust.

And gratitude was what Peter felt when he arrived at John o' Groats after 30 days and 1,100 miles to be met by cheering family members. "When I got to John o' Groats I embraced the post and then knelt down on the ground and thanked God. All wonderful – but don't put any money on my doing it at 95!" ●

Your own E2E

If Peter's story has inspired you to consider doing an End to End yourself, you can find all the tools you need to plan it on our website at cyclinguk.org/lejog. Whether you prefer to complete the route as quickly as possible or take your time on quieter roads, our information pack has the right route for you, with GPX files and ideas for accommodation along the way. Find out the best time of year to attempt the ride, and whether you should go from south to north (LEJOG) or the opposite (JOGLE). And don't forget to check out the Cycling UK Forum (forum.cyclinguk.org), where LEJOGers past, present and future share information and experiences.



More Info

Peter's fundraising page is:

[justgiving.com/campaign/peterlangford](https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/peterlangford)

