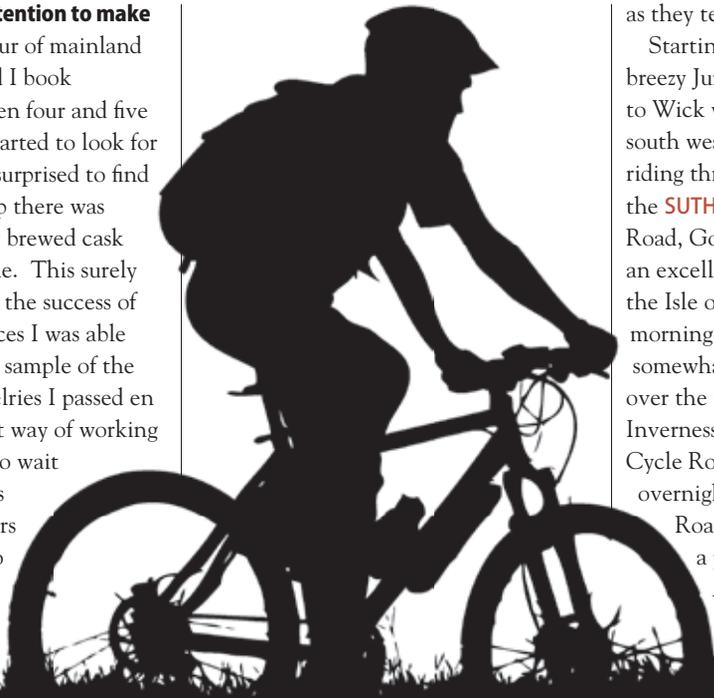


ONE CYCLIST, 874 MILES, 15 PUBS, 20 PINTS, 21 DAYS IN THE HOWLING RAIN...



Real ale drinkers will travel the length of the UK to make sure they get a decent pint, which is literally what cyclist **Peter Mackay** did in what must be the most epic pub tour we've come across – from John O'Groats to Lands End by bike.

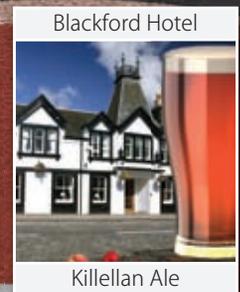
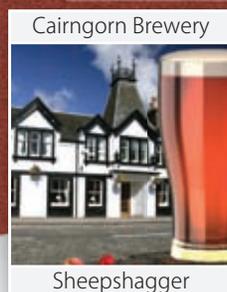
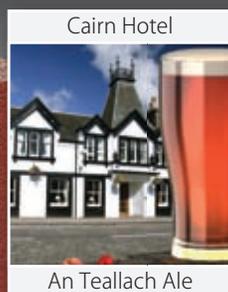
It had never been my intention to make the journey a real ale tour of mainland Britain. At no stage did I book accommodation. Between four and five pm in the afternoon I started to look for a place to stay and was surprised to find that at almost every stop there was excellent quality locally brewed cask conditioned ale available. This surely must be a monument to the success of CAMRA. Alas the places I was able to visit were but a small sample of the promising looking hostleries I passed en route. Cycling is a great way of working up a thirst but one has to wait until the day's journey is finished! Drunken drivers are unfortunately all too common but drunken cyclists are quite rare,



as they tend not to live very long.

Starting from John O' Groats on a breezy June day I made good progress to Wick where I encountered a strong south westerly wind that made hard riding through Helmsdale, Brora to the **SUTHERLAND ARMS**, Old Bank Road, Golspie where I was treated to an excellent pint of Red Cuillin from the Isle of Skye brewery. The following morning the wind had moderated somewhat making a much easier passage over the Dornoch & Moray Firths to Inverness where I picked up National Cycle Route 7 to Carrbridge. Pausing overnight at the **CAIRN HOTEL**, Main Road, Carrbridge I was treated to a pint or two of An Teallach Ale from Ullapool. The next day was what the weather ☔

John O'Groats.....Golspie.....Carrbridge.....Aviemore.....Pitlochry.....Blackford.....



Initially the route took me alongside the Pennines to Appleby, over Ravensworth fell and a splendid run down through Orton to Tebay

forecasters call 'showers with sunny spells' that for a cyclist means that you are soaked one minute and roasted the next. However in spite of this I made good progress down Cycle Route 7, pausing briefly at the **CAIRNGORM BREWERY** in Aviemore where I purchased a bottle of the intriguingly named Sheepshagger. The route took me on minor roads and dirt tracks down the old A9 through Newtonmore, over the Drumochter Pass to Blair Atholl and Pitlochry. Here I headed up the hill to the **MOULIN HOTEL** a famous brewpub in Pitlochry. After checking in I parked my bicycle in the brewery and headed for the bar and a pint of Braveheart. The next day I had a relatively short run of 47 miles to my home in Blackford where at The **BLACKFORD HOTEL**, Moray Street, I was treated to a pint of the celebrated Killellan Ale (the Champion Beer of Great Britain 2005) from the

Houston Brewery of Renfrewshire.

After a few days rest at home I resumed my southward journey with a short trip of thirty miles to Grangemouth and a pint of Abbot Ale with a meal at the **EALR OF ZETLAND**, the local Wetherspoons, on Bo'Ness Road. From Grangemouth I passed through Whitburn and then crossed a bleak area of moorland before entering the beautiful Scottish Border Country near Peebles. Ten miles further on I reached the small town of Innerleithen where, at the **TRAQUAIR ARMS**, enjoyed a few pints of Bear Ale, brewed at nearby Traquair House in an 18th century brew house using the original oak vessels.

The next day was one of the two wettest days of the journey and also one that involved some of the steepest climbs of the ride over the border hills through Etterick Forest, past the Eskdalemuir weather station to Langholm. Later in the afternoon the rain eased off a little and I was able to enjoy the rest of the days ride to Brampton where I was greatly cheered by a pint of Brampton Ale at the **RED LION** in Chatsworth



Road. As if to make up for the dreadful weather of yesterday the sun emerged from the clouds at about 11am and the remainder of the day was warm and sunny. Initially the route took me alongside the Pennines to Appleby, over Ravensworth fell and a splendid run down through Orton to Tebay. Passing over the railway and under the motorway there followed a steep climb and pleasant ride to Sedbergh in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. Here I was able to soak in a hot tub to ease tired muscles and replace lost liquid with a pint of Lakeland Ale at the **BULL HOTEL**, on the Main Street, Sedbergh. In this very wet summer it seems that we are only allowed one day a week of good weather and the next day although dry was cloudy with disappointingly low cloud spoiling any view of the Yorkshire Fells as I made my way through Kirkby Lonsdale down to Settle. Leaving the Cycle Route 68 that I had followed on and off since Brampton I headed past Clitheroe to Chorley and pint of Cumberland Ale at the **BAY HORSE** Inn, Babylon Lane, Heath Charnock. After spending a restful weekend with my brother and family I cycled towards Wigan where I

picked up the A49 through Warrington and across the Manchester ship canal into Cheshire. Continuing down the A49 through the pleasant Cheshire countryside I arrived at the market town of Whitchurch. Booking into the **DODDINGTON LODGE HOTEL**, a Cask Marque approved premises. Here I quenched my thirst on a pint of Old Speckled Hen.

The following day proved to be the second wettest of the journey with frequent heavy showers. The only thing to do in such conditions is to press on. Fortunately it was also warm and was a bit like cycling in a warm shower. The route took me along the borders of Wales through Shrewsbury, Ludlow & Leominster to Hereford where I entered the territory of the Wye Valley Brewery. At the **MERTON HOTEL**, Commercial Road, Hereford, I had the difficult decision of choosing between the HPA or the Butty Bach so I tried both. As if to make up for the foul conditions of yesterday the weather had changed overnight. I was treated with sunshine to enjoy the beauty of the Wye Valley past Tintern Abbey to Chepstow. Here I picked up Cycle Route 4 across the Severn to Clevedon where I spent a few nights with friends before tackling



the easy cycling of Somerset Levels to Bridgewater. At this point the character of the country changed with frequent steep hills as I skirted the eastern edge of Exmoor to Tiverton and a pint of Bass at the **TIVERTON HOTEL** on Blundells Road. A steep climb the following morning took me out of Tiverton along the B3137 and the B3220 to Eggesford Station and then on minor roads between Exmoor and Dartmoor to Hatherleigh. Entering Cornwall I proceeded down the A39 to Camelford. Here the St Austell owned **DARLINGTON INN**, Fore Street, Camelford, provided

Would you like to take part?

BEER's Pub Tour is written by you! If you've been on a memorable real ale trail, tell us about it. We're also after My Local submissions – celebrate your local pub by telling us about what makes it so special. For both Pub Tour and My Local features, we'll need 1,000 words and a selection of high-resolution digital pictures, sent to tom.stainer@camra.org.uk

.....Grangemouth.....Innerleithen.....Brampton.....Sedbergh.....Heath Charnock.....Whitchurch.....Hereford.....Tiverton.....Camelford.....Sennen Cove/Land's End

