

## De Lay of de Toucan

*(To be sung to a calypso beat, but only because I liked the pun in the title)*

*Well I'm cycling to work, it's another wet day,  
When I come to de crossing at Glenfrith Way.  
De lights of de toucan they're always at red;  
Every day they cost me an hour in bed.*

*(chorus)*

*Toucan, toucan, toucan please,  
De rainwater's dripping over my knees.  
Your terrible red is all I seen;  
Why don't you hurry and change to green?*

*I press the button but I aint got a hope;  
The traffic roars by and I stand here & mope.  
Then all of a sudden there's a break in the flow  
So I stand on the pedals and over I go.*

*(chorus)*

*Toucan, toucan, toucan please,  
De rainwater's dripping over my knees.  
Your terrible red is all I seen;  
Why don't you hurry and change to green?*

*I look behind as I'm on my way;  
The toucan's still red, he got nothing to say.  
But in a few minutes he'll react to my call  
And the cars will all stop for nothing at all.*

*(chorus, one last time, with feeling)*

*Toucan, toucan, toucan please,  
De rainwater's dripping over my knees.  
Your terrible red is all I seen;  
Why don't you hurry and change to green?*

John Morfey

Leicester Cyclist is the official newsletter of Leicester Spokes.

For membership, ride information, and further details visit the Spokes website: [www.leicesterspokes.org.uk](http://www.leicesterspokes.org.uk).

Mailing address: c/o Voluntary Action Leicester, 9 Newarke Street, Leicester LE1 5SN

## Pavement Cyclists

According to the Leicester Mail (March 15th, 207 issue), cyclists caught riding on pavements could be made to have road safety classes.

'Leicester City Council is looking at ways to reduce the number of people who ride on footpaths.

'They say people who ride on pavements are often less confident cyclists and extra bike training could help address the problem.

On the other hand, cyclists who are caught riding on the pavement can face a £30 on the spot fine, though only two such fixed penalty notices were issued between April 2006-April 2007.

## Summer Cycling Rides

Summer is here, and for those who put away their bikes for the winter, you may not know that the Spokes rides have carried on at the usual times - Wednesday evenings at 7pm; and on selected Sundays - please see the website for more details ([www.leicesterspokes.org.uk](http://www.leicesterspokes.org.uk)). Quite a few Spokes riders will be doing the Vale of Belvoir charity ride on Sunday, May 13th, which benefits the British Heart Foundation.

## ITV to Screen Bike Comedy

There will be an ITV sitcom pilot about cycling police, written by Drop the Dead Donkey's Guy Jenkin

'Bike Squad' follows a group of cycling coppers, and will air as a 90-minute pilot early next year, with a possible series to follow.

### Editor's Note

***I hope you have enjoyed this edition of the Leicester Cyclist. This will be my last issue as editor; and I would like to thank those who have assisted with the production, particularly John Woodcraft, who among other things has proofread every issue. There have also been a number of regular contributors who have efficiently produced interesting articles, often at short notice!***

***- Mark Ingle***

# LEICESTER CYCLIST

for cyclists in and around Leicester

Summer 2007

## Spokes AGM

The Spokes 2007 AGM will take place on Monday, May 21st at 7pm at Friends Meeting House on Queens Road.

## Bike Week

The UK's nationwide celebration of cycling will take place on 16-24th June 2007.

Further details at [www.bikeweek.org.uk](http://www.bikeweek.org.uk)

## YouTube

YouTube now features a selection of short basic cycle maintenance videos. The films are

aimed squarely at beginners, and can be found here: <http://www.youtube.com/group/bicyclemaintenance>

## Reporting Potholes

The CTC have developed an on-line tool so cyclists can report the location of potholes and other road defects, at <http://www.fillthathole.org.uk>

The website allows users to zoom into any road in the UK, mark the location of a defect, and provide this information to the local authority, who then has a duty to take action. It is also possible to include photos and other useful information.

***In this issue of Leicester Cyclist, we have articles and photos of cycling in different parts of Europe, including Britain.***



**ATTITUDES TO CYCLING:** This photo shows the bike racks that greeted me when I exited Amsterdam Amstel station. By a quick calculation I estimated 60 bikes in a row and a minimum of 15 rows; so that's around 900 bikes outside a local railway station! Amazing how many people will cycle when the infrastructure is there. - Patrick Cartwright

It was the second year running Rhian and I had travelled to Austria for a cycling holiday; and we're already talking of going again. Why??

The country is spotlessly clean, the people hospitable, and it's a cyclist's paradise. Last year (2005) we flew to Linz from Stanstead to cycle alongside the Danube (Passau to Vienna). We took our own bikes despite the fact we were warned that they would be literally thrown on to the plane. They came through relatively unscathed, but the hassle of getting them on and off at the airports along with the expense of the transit make it unworthwhile, in my opinion.

**"The scenery once you get into the countryside is absolutely stunning. With snow-capped mountains all around, we rode through meadows and forests making our way to the lakes."**

The weather in Austria can be rather unpredictable, even in July; and unfortunately in 2005 it rained for the first three days, not nice when your intention is to camp en route.

Yes we had a tent, sleeping bag, and roll up mat strapped to the pannier rack, one has to be prepared to take the minimal amount of clothes, and once they get wet which they inevitably do, it becomes a problem getting them dry. It therefore became necessary for us to stay in B&B for a few nights, which surprisingly turned out to be fairly cheap around 20euro each for a double room ensuite. Thankfully the weather improved and we had a thoroughly enjoyable holiday, recording 300 miles on the cycle computer.

by Graham Wheatley



This year we flew Coventry to Salzburg with Thompson's, a return flight costing around £55. I would recommend Salzburg to anyone, even if its only a long weekend, as there's so much to see and the city is really beautiful.

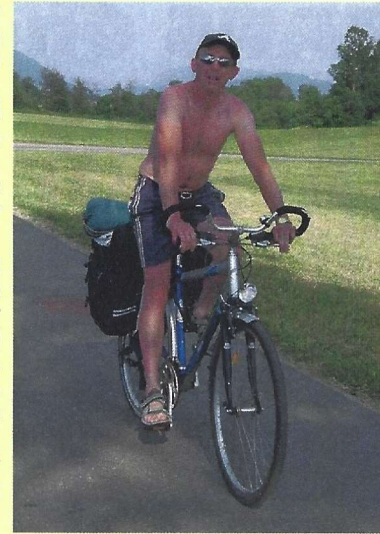
Accommodation is a bit pricey, as you'd expect in a touristy city; but for anyone that doesn't mind camping, (yes we took the tent again) there's a nice little campsite on the outskirts called Sam Nor, which cost 5 euro per person plus 6 for the tent per night.

The guy on the desk spoke good English and was very helpful; they also hired out bikes on behalf of Pro Bike. The cycles were normally hired out for a day or by the hour; but we were able to arrange to hire them for the week, which cost us 41 Euro plus 5 euro for the panniers. We spent the next day exploring Salzburg, and the following morning Pro Bike had delivered our our brand new panniers to the campsite, so good were they that we both purchased them on our return the following Saturday. Wouldn't have minded having the bike too, but mustn't be greedy.

Cycling in Austria is great; they've really spent some money on making it enjoyable for people, with dedicated cycle paths everywhere. The ride into Salzburg itself makes it the best way to get around though if one wishes, there's also an excellent public transport system which is very punctual, very clean, and you can even take your bike onboard! A 24-hour ticket costs only 3.5 Euro,

We locked our cycles, using the locks provided, to one of the numerous racks provided, leaving tent and full panniers on the back of the bikes, with a feeling of security that you don't get in this country.

The scenery once you get into the countryside is absolutely stunning. With snow-capped mountains all



around, we rode through meadows and forests making our way to the lakes.

The Salzkammergut region of Austria contains a number of large lakes, our intention was to see as much of the area as possible in the eight days we had, stopping along the way at campsites or B&B the majority of which are dotted along the edges of the lakes. Such was the diversity of the landscape we never knew what to expect next; and although the roads around the lakes were relatively flat, in-between were some tough inclines (cyclists never use

the word hills) to negotiate. On a couple of occasions our only course of action was to get off and push.

The weather in June turned out to be fantastic, so we made a lot more use of the tent, this was pleasing, as there's not much fun in hauling camping gear around for a week and not being able to use it. I'd worked out a circular route starting and finishing in Salzburg and taking in half a dozen or so lakes, unfortunately the rented bikes were not equipped with computers so the exact mileage this year is unknown, but I estimate it to be around 200 miles, less than last year, probably due to the fact that we spent more time sunbathing.

All in all a thoroughly great holiday, can't wait to go again. □

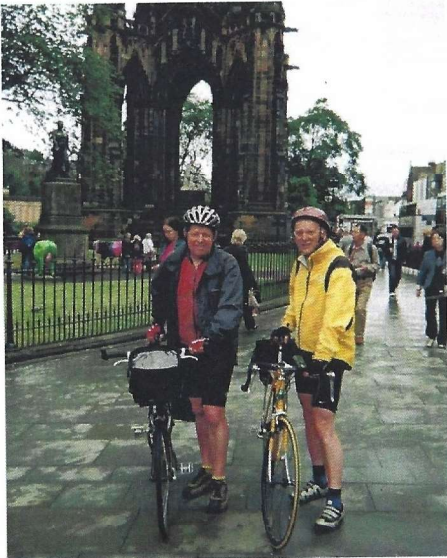


# SUSTRANS One Ride

by Philip Draycott

In late June 2006, two of us rode Newcastle - Edinburgh along Sustrans Route One (the "Coast & Castles Cycle Route"). Route One will eventually run John O'Groats - Dover and is being opened in sections. This section was an excellent choice for a short (ie 4 or 5 days, 200 miles) fairly easy ride with a good rail link at each end. Rather than write a Tour Diary (not all that interesting if you weren't there!) I thought I'd jot down a series of thoughts in case anyone else is thinking of doing the same ride (strongly recommended):

1) The rail part was fairly easy. Booking in advance, we paid £55 each including bikes for Leicester - Newcastle then back from Edinburgh which we thought was OK. Both stations are large, central and fairly bike-friendly but with no secure bike storage beyond racks. In fact



Journey's end: Daniel & Philip arrive in Edinburgh

Bike Park type central secure storage seems to be a Leicester-only idea. No-one else had even heard of such a thing, including the Edinburgh office of Sustrans.

**"The area is notorious for strong winds. Riding South-North did seem to be the right decision."**

2) Although the ride out of Newcastle was interesting in terms of Urban Regeneration (lots of abandoned shipyards with various projects going on to bring life back), I'll risk the wrath of the Geordie Liberation Front by saying that the first fifth of the ride is less fun than the rest. You could well start from the railway station at Alnmouth (pronounced Allen-mouth, three syllables) and head north. You'd miss out Blyth (not special) and Amble (on a Sunday night it was one of the grimmest places I've ever been. Ex-fishing, ex-mining. Avoid) If you started from Acklington Station you could include the impressive Warkworth Castle but there are plenty more big castles to come!

3) Buy the Sustrans official Route Map BUT the route is 'evolving' and the map we bought (in early 2006) was dated 2000. This meant the route round Galashiels was totally different on the ground from the one on the map. In fact, at first we managed to miss Galashiels and had to turn back. A new map is promised soon and is needed! When we first looked at the route it looked hopelessly twisty and long-winded. We predicted we'd often abandon it and use the larger straighter roads. But in fact we enjoyed the route greatly, the signing is very reliable and easy to follow and we only deviated from it twice in five days.

4) Even though the schools had not yet broken up, finding accommodation (B&Bs) was much less easy than we'd expected. The local Tourist Board offices were generally hopeless (sorry), with an unhelpful system and, because they

charge the B&B for being listed and don't provide many customers, many, even most, B&Bs aren't on their lists. We'd also got a free 'Stay on a Farm' booklet from [www.farmstayuk.co.uk](http://www.farmstayuk.co.uk). The farms look great but are scattered fairly thinly and at least two we tried were fully booked. One B&B owner did say that she doesn't take single night bookings (which cycle tourists generally will be) in advance as she's rather hold out in the hope of getting longer bookings which are less trouble for the same money. We always did find accom, it was good and cost £25-35 a night with excellent breakfasts, just don't expect it to be easy.

5) We always asked in advance but everywhere found us secure bike storage for the night; usually in the B&B owner's garage. Don't even think of leaving your valuable bike on the street for the night.

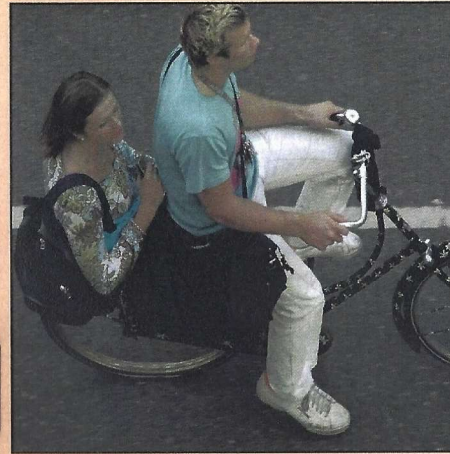
6) The area is notorious for strong winds. Riding South-North did seem to be the right decision. The first day we did have a nasty cold headwind, but then for most of the rest of the coastal section we enjoyed a gentle tailwind. Partly but not entirely luck.

7) There are no severe hills (well maybe one short one to avoid the A1) and the scenery is wonderful; particularly, to our surprise, the last quarter.

8) Don't try to rush the ride. If you don't know the area (and neither of us did) there is so much to see that you'll want to stop, sample, linger, sup, visit etc. You'd be crazy not to. Plus, everyone we met was so pleasant (except sometimes in Amble and Blyth) and wanted to chat, pass the time of day etc. So, whatever you're comfortable with, but I'd suggest certainly no more than 50-60 miles a day. □

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE RIDE

- a) **The Millennium Bridge and the Tyne Foot Tunnel** in Newcastle & Gateshead, which you'd miss by starting further North. Also the kittiwakes flying around near and under the Tyne bridges and the newly-built kittiwake roosting tower that we were amazed to find a mile or so further down the Tyne.
- b) **Warkworth Castle and Bamburgh** ditto and the whole fortified town of Berwick on Tweed.
- c) **Craster kippers**. Strongly flavoured and utterly wonderful.
- d) **The Farne Islands**. We put half a day aside and took the boat trip. If you're at all interested in sea birds (plus seals) it's heaven. We were very lucky with our timing; tens of thousands of guillemot, razorbill and shag chicks had hatched but not yet flown off so the place was very crowded! The puffin chicks were also there but in their burrows. Plenty of parent puffins with photogenic beakfuls of silvery sand eels though.
- e) **Lindisfarne (Holy Island)** is another major attraction. When we arrived at the causeway, the tide was low and just turning which meant a visit for us wasn't an option. Another time!
- f) **Swimming in the sea below the walls of Bamburgh Castle**. Not really that cold in June and not to be missed!
- g) **The Tweed Valley**. Rich rolling farmland, lovely cycling with plenty of enjoyable small towns (Coldstream, Melrose etc) for refuelling. Lots of people to chat to, including two utterly delightful elderly salmon anglers who seemed to spend all of every day of their retirement sitting on their favourite pedestrian bridge over the Tweed near Coldstream chatting and drinking white wine.
- h) **The bike shop in Inverleithen, near Peebles**. We needed it! A big MTB area apparently.
- i) **The Moorfoot Hills**. Neither of us had ever heard of them before (they're due south of Edinburgh). A long gentle climb, lots of wild-life. Bleak(ish) and beautiful with the most stunning view of the whole of the Firth of Forth plus Edinburgh looking like an 18th century engraving from the top before a long exciting descent down a velvety smooth, recently resurfaced road. Bike touring bliss!
- j) **Seeing a Short Eared Owl flying across a hillside in the Moorfoots**.
- k) **Jenners on Princes Street, Edinburgh**. Just the best department store ever.



Laura Domela spent an hour each day photographing bicycle commuters from an apartment in Amsterdam. Over four and a half days she photographed more than 1,600 bicycles. Amsterdam has 540,000 bikes and 744,000 inhabitants!

The experience has changed the way Laura cycles *'Instead of spending 20 minutes before the ride collecting bike shorts, Lycra jerseys, heart rate monitors, cycling gloves, helmets, sunglasses, energy bars, and water... I just hop on the bike and go!'*



# FIETSEN



Laura has published these photos and many more in a 129 page book called *Fietsen* (which is Dutch for bicycles [noun], or ride a bicycle [verb])

The book is priced at £21 and can be ordered from [www.domela.com](http://www.domela.com)

Photos courtesy of and © Laura Domela; thanks also to Holland Herald (where some of these photos were originally published, in February 2007).

As many of you will by now know (especially those of you that have had the dubious pleasure of seeing some of the 1000 photos we took) Val & I spent 10 weeks away starting at the end of December 2006.

We visited the US, Fiji, Australia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Cambodia & Laos.

Whilst in Cambodia and Laos, we had the opportunity to hire bikes.

Unfortunately in Laos my camera was stolen, so some of the photos I took which could be of interest to Spokes members were lost, but at least we have the memories... 'like the lady who surpassed Richard with the size of her panniers (they were, in fact, two huge wicker baskets at least a meter tall)... or a Cambodian answer to "biffa" recyclers, with three holders supporting plastic bags for collecting the rubbish.'

The bikes we hired in Laos had 20" wheels and were just like the old Raleigh Shopper, with no gears but not quite as heavy. They were called Fairy bikes (*no comments thank you*). We spent hours meandering around the really quiet roads, talking (well saying hello in Laos, but not understanding any of the replies).

However by far the most interesting was our trip in Kep on the coast of Cambodia. Kep is about 30 minutes drive from the Vietnam border and was, until the Pol Pot era, the Cambodian French Riviera – with grand villas where the well-to-do of Cambodian society entertained. That all changed when the Khmer Rouge came to power – the villas were burnt out (see photo below), the occupants killed, and the regular Cambodians forced to leave their



## 2007 World Tour

*by Ian Nightingale*

homes, either to be forced to work in labour camps or killed. Only the fishermen were allowed to stay.

That all sounds really depressing, but today the Cambodian people are amazingly friendly and full of hope for the future.

What you have to understand in Cambodia is that there is a strict transport hierarchy. Children generally ride bikes, adult males ride motorcycles, and if those with loads of money have a car or Tuk Tuk. So you can imagine what a stir the sight of two fully grown European tourists on pushbikes was. We got lost, so what should have been a relatively short trip to the beach ended up in a 50 kilometre ride, and no beach. We did however get the chance to visit several local villages and practice our miming skills whilst trying to find out what was in the steaming pots of food in the market.

We got caught up in the children returning from school at lunchtime, and again in the evening – all dressed up in their clean white shirts and blue shorts or skirts. As any of my white T shirts only stayed white for about 5 minutes when I first put them on, their mums must have been using "DAZ". Every one was so friendly and repeated the phrases they had learnt at school. *Hello, how are you, how old are you, where are you going and where have you been.* The only problem was that they didn't understand our replies; and if we were honest we didn't know where we were going or where we had been!

Any way it was a super time and I would thoroughly recommend it to members. □



*This charity ride in Egypt took place on the 4th to 9th of November, consisting of nine days with so much more than cycling. There were five consecutive days of cycling covering a total of 408 km (approx. 250 miles). A group of 32 participants have so far raised £102,000 (to date) for the British heart Foundation to spend on research and treatment for heart disease. I am very grateful to Spokes for their donation of £200 towards my sponsorship.*

### Organisation

The organisation and management of this trip by the British Heart Foundation was excellent.

We spent the first day sightseeing in Cairo, then flew to Luxor where we boarded Ninfeadu, the boat that would be our 'home' for the rest of the tour. The cabins were on the bottom deck, but were roomy, stable & comfortable. The top deck had plenty of sun loungers, a Jacuzzi & plunge pool, and our bikes were stored here.

### The Ride

Cycling began on the third day; with the boat following the Nile south we would meet up each evening.

In addition to the doctor and support staff, a truck full of armed police accompanied us all the time we were on the road, stopping the traffic at busy junctions.

The mileage each day varied from approx. 30 miles (two half cycling days) to a maximum of 79 miles.

This part of Egypt is agricultural and comprises of many small holdings; the ground is very fertile most of the soil being deposited by the Nile before the Aswan dam was built. I was surprised to see tomatoes being picked and donkeys weighed down with carrots, testament to the wonders of irrigation in such a hot country.

We cycled through or moored in the small towns of Esna, Edfu, Aswan, and Kom Ombo. Being afloat does mean some changes to schedule and opportunities to view shore life and other boats, as well as simple pleasures such as the opportunity to relax and watch the sunset.

Initially we cycled on the West bank and then crossed the Nile

## RIVER NILE BIKE RIDE

(Edited Version)  
by Christine Keen

on small boats to meet up with our boat at Aswan, Egypt's southern most city on the east bank of the Nile.

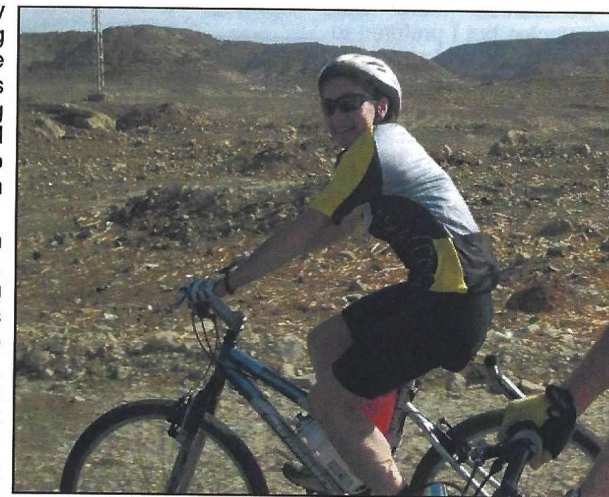
### Aswan Dam

The route was mostly flat with the odd incline; but at

Aswan we cycled through the town to the low dam and then up to the high dam, a wonderful climb which I thoroughly enjoyed.

The world famous dam provides irrigation and electricity for the whole of Egypt. Cycling along the high dam we were able to gaze across Lake Nassar, the huge reservoir created when it was built. The high dam created a 30% increase in the cultivable land in Egypt, and raised the water table as far away as Algeria.

Egypt is noted for its birdlife and we saw a variety of birds including kingfishers and egrets. Most of the route was close to the Nile, apart from when we went into the desert. The farming techniques were almost biblical, with oxen everywhere ploughing and turning wheels. There is poverty but our regular guide told us that no one starves in Egypt.



• Look who's wearing trendy cycling gear!



• Everyone tried to assist in fixing the puncture!

### Roads and other hazards

About eight out of every 10 tourists to Egypt will get ill at some point in their trip, and sadly this applied to our group. However most were well again within a day or so; and it was reassuring to have a doctor accompanying us during the trip.

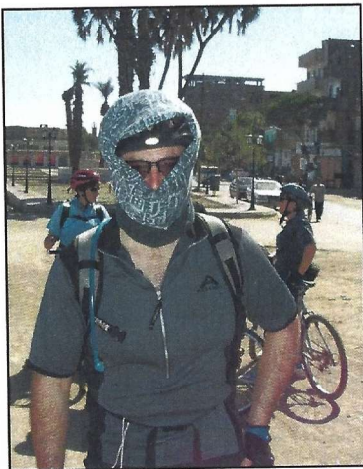
Although there were some loose surfaces and potholes, overall the road surfaces were better than I expected. The mountain bikes were ideal for these conditions, though I was surprised at how difficult it is to pedal in just a relatively light covering of sand.

Cycling in a relatively large group can be problematic in that obstacles and hazards are hidden by the people in front. Sometimes there were warnings of

potholes but I preferred to look ahead and anticipate myself. We were encouraged to keep in small groups but this is difficult for stronger cyclists and anyone who likes to sing their favourite Planxty cycling song.

During the trip, one girl sustained a fractured collarbone but carried on cycling for the rest of the trip, despite being in pain. The stoicism of injured and unwell cyclists was a characteristic of the group.

There were train lines criss-crossing the road



• The new look in cycling wear.

and these needed to be crossed at the right speed and angle, again there were some accidents. Our road crew often marked these hazards for us.

Other hazards consisted of people and other vehicles. Every passing vehicle sounded its horn for every cyclist, regardless of gender. Drivers passed close to cyclists, rarely slowing down. Our crew often acted as barriers between other vehicles and us, without which the roads would have been a much 'hairier' experience. Most Egyptians seemed to want to wave shout or greet you in some way; the children often asked our names or said 'money!' Children also liked to slap passing cyclists and occasionally throw stones at them!

### Weather

The temperature was around 26-27°C, a dry heat that I found fine for cycling, with most wearing t-shirts. We were often on our bikes by 7.30 when it was still cold and the early morning mist lent a surreal feel.

We had been told in advance that we must have our knees and shoulders covered whilst cycling as Egypt is a Muslim country. However, I think that we'd have received lots of attention whatever we were wearing.

## HIGHLIGHT OF THE TRIP

The fourth day of cycling was probably my favorite, we woke at 5.30, although some of us on one side of the boat had probably been wakened by the call to prayer from the Mosque, this was generally between 4 and 4.30 am. I now think of it as something quintessentially Egyptian and wish I had a recording in case I should ever have awful neighbours.

The ride took us winding upward towards a Nubian village and was spectacular as we were now on the edge of the desert, with lush green fertility on one side of the road and a rock & sand landscape on the other. The colours & contrasts were striking.

### Food

All-important to cyclists this was plentiful on the trip. Every 15-20 km we had a break for water and food, with bananas, dates, oranges and nuts. We always had a hot lunch prepared by the crew from the boat. Egypt is a good place to be vegetarian and there were vegetarian specialities such as falafel, hummus, baba ganoush and the traditional Ful medames.

### Non-cycling highlights

I have to mention Egyptian donkeys who must be the most attractive in the world and could all star in nativity plays. They were a

source of constant amusement and joking in the group, second only to public toilets. One cyclist managed to cycle into a donkey, but luckily the long eared beast was unharmed. As a former veterinary nurse, it was pleasing that they looked quite well looked after, certainly better than the horses we saw.

Because of space constraints, this version has been edited; and a full version can be viewed on the Leicester Spokes website. Please contact me for any more information/details or to see any more of the 300 plus photos from the trip.

Chris Keen - ckeen@dmu.ac.uk

## 2006 LEICESTER - LONDON



A couple of photos from the all-night-ride to London. We had lovely warm weather, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed the ride, which was organised by Graham and Patrick. Photos courtesy of Richard Norris.