

It's the simple things that matter on 550 mile cycle

64 cheery riders set out into the evening sun from Heeley on inaugural All :Points North Endurance cycle

FEATURE

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It's the simple things that matter when you're in the middle of a 550 mile bike ride from Sheffield to Morecambe Bay, the Scottish border, Flamborough Head and back again on a bank holiday weekend.

It is like sleeping.

"I found a pavement at a Park and Ride site near Durham, where a duct was blowing hot air," said Ashley Sharp. "I thought at the time, this is crackers, but you do it because you're so tired. After riding for 28 hours without stopping you can sleep on a plank."

Some 64 cheery riders set out into the evening sun from Heeley on the inaugural All Points North endurance cycling event last Friday, ready to find their way to nine sadistically chosen checkpoints scattered around the moors, wind lashed seafronts and lonely hilltops of northern England.

"These landscapes are seriously beautiful, even if it is raining," said Pawel Pulawski. "Next time I'll come back



All Points North cycling event: Tim McInnes at the pre race briefing

and do it slower and bring my family with me."

Hosted by Heeley Trust and organised by the Trust's Recycle Bikes Cycling Projects Manager Angela Walker, All Points North was inspired by a French community long distance cycling event Angela rode last year (after completing the 2,500

mile Transcontinental Cycle race in 2017).

"We wanted to showcase the north of England to people who didn't ride up here," said Angela.

"We've shown Yorkshire in all its character," said Heeley Trust's Andy Jackson. "It's gritty, windy, misty, sunny, it's one of the finest landscapes you'll see."

Riders from France, Poland, Bulgaria, Canada, Bristol, London, Scotland and all over South Yorkshire ventured out with sleeping bags, bikes, raincoats (and little else) to find their own way to checkpoints scattered across Yorkshire, Northumberland,

Cumbria and Lancashire.

Returning riders said they were stunned by the 'amazing varied landscapes' of northern England.

The event was unsupported out in the wilds, but staffed by a 20 strong team of staff and volunteers back at the base at Heeley Institute, including mechanics from Recycle Bikes tweaking the bikes to perfection before the start and kitchen staff doling out tea, food (and beer) to exhausted cyclists from Sunday afternoon onwards.

Meanwhile Angela and colleague Tory Gray spent hours staring at tiny col-

oured dots on their computer depicting the GPS signal of riders making their way around the route.

The aim was to launch a 1,000 km (or thereabouts) challenging event based on the toughness of the north of England that would draw in both newcomers to endurance cycling and keen participants wanting to train or test themselves in a challenging new landscape.

Now after the successful first run (with around half the participants battling the mountains and weather to finish) the hope is that All Points North will soon stand alongside internationally

famous endurance rides like Europe's Transcontinental, the Normandicat in France and Transatlantic Way in Ireland.

First of the eleven women riders back was Philippa Battye who said more women are taking part in endurance events of all kinds.

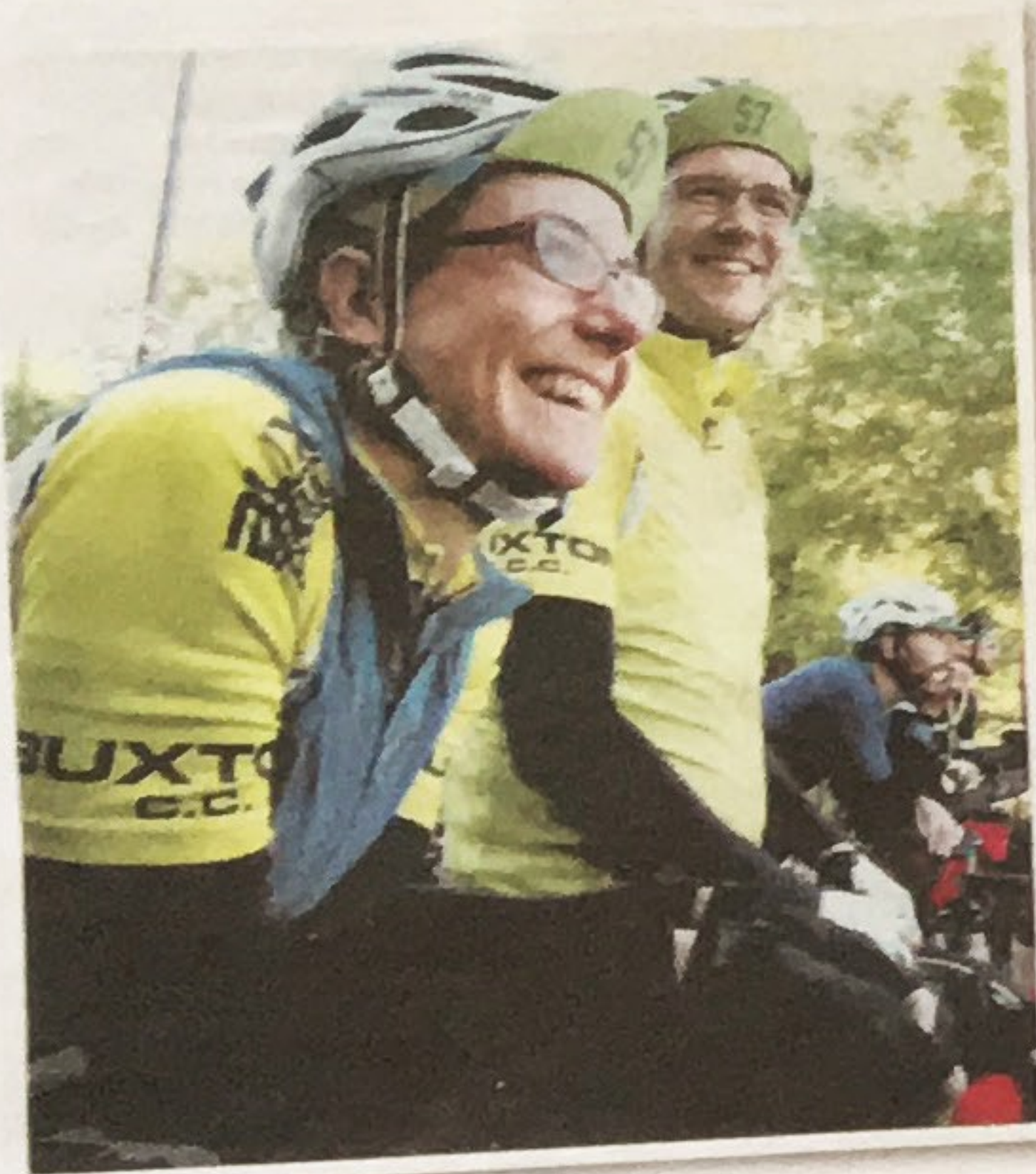
"Long distance cycling is an amazing supportive community, and there are very few sports where women can stand side by side with men on the start line."

She added that although women struggle to match men on power and strength, women's endurance can match many male riders: Philippa finished her circuit in under 57 hours, at 11th rider out of 35 finishers.

Pawel Puwalski managed his circuit in under two days, after declining to sleep. "I had two 15 minute naps" he conceded. (He also found time to stop and pump up a young girl's flat tyre after she and her dad hailed him on the way out from Heeley to Knaresborough).

After first finishes at several multi-day rides, Pawel calculated that he could pretty much keep going throughout his 850 km tour of northern England.

"If I set a goal I try to reach it," he said. "When you finish an event like this you feel stronger mentally. Getting out of your comfort zone is good for other things in your life. It is character building stuff," said Andy Jackson. "This will be a lifetime's experience for many riders." Visit www.allpointsnorth.co for more or www.justgiving.com/David-Bocking.



Organiser Angela Walker (centre) with first woman finisher Philippa Battye and first male finisher Pawel Pulawski



A soaked Stephen Haines takes a selfie at the Scottish border