Velo Teifi Cycling Club

Tour of France 2009

The Chairman's Diary

(Le journal intime du Chairman)

Friday 17th July 2009

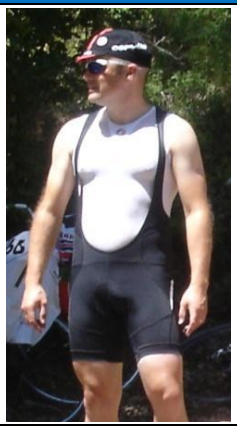
Day 1. Le Grande Depart.

The great day arriveth. Ten months in the organising... herding cats proved an easier exercise at times. But hey, we're here and it's time to get ready for the Velo Teifi assault on France.

Lunch time. Pick up the three hire cars; how difficult can it be? (Our thanks go to the Europcar boys (and girl) in Carmarthen for the vehicle hire and speedy processing of our details). So, our vehicle choices: a Mercedes Vito, a Kia Sedona and a Ford Galaxy. Hmmm... (We had the last two types when we went to the Pyrenees – the Kia had bread-van like tendencies and a real thirst; the Ford was the preferred option). I think Andrew had the Galaxy that time, so I'm confident he'll let Howard have it this ti... nope, too late. Tears already and it's only 12 o'clock. It's OK Howard, let the nasty man have the nice car, we'll punish him later...

So it's the Merc for me and the Sedona – a.k.a. the Hippo – for the Howard-party. You didn't think I was going to take the Hippo did you? Stop blubbing Williams and get the Korean piece of c**p out of the way of my Teutonic loveliness.

So who's on this trip? What hardy mountain goats are partaking in our little *sojourn*? More pertinently, which ones failed to make any of the pre-trip training days and will be requiring medical attention road-side...? Who will be found wanting on Ventoux? Who will be left gasping on the Col d'Iseran? Who will be the first to punch the Chairman if he writes anything too insulting?

Well, there's Janice...	There's Lynn...	There's Mike... a.k.a. Jav-lar	There's Jason...
There's Howard and Barri...	There's Cynan...	There's Andrew...	There's Dylan...
			
	And there's the less-often spotted Chairman...		

Right then – everyone load up the cars, kiss farewell to loved ones and we'll rendezvous in CK's car park at 1800 hours. All got that? Good.

1800 hours.

What do you mean he's forgotten his passport? Not a good start, young Barri, not a good start.

We've christened the Vito "The A Team Bus"; Mad-Dog Murdoch – Janice, Mr T – Jav-lar, Faceman – Jason, Hannibal – Chairman. Are we having fun, or what? The Hippo is still the Hippo however and the Galaxy is still, well, faster than the rest of us. Will that smug look remain on Andrew's face for the whole trip, I ponder to myself.

The A Team Bus...
Daa da da, duh duh daa, da-da-daa-da-da-daa, duh-duh-da-da...

Six hours later and we're on the ferry. No Howard, it's not full of that kind of seaman. An hour and a bit later *et nous sommes en France;* great, or *Zut alors!* (as Andrew will seemingly insist on saying all week to any unsuspecting French waiter who will listen).

We disembark and charge into the dark French morning. Shall we stick together and drive in convoy? The answer is revealed 25 minutes and 25 Euros-worth of collective phonecalls later. We're all over the place. The Galaxy is in warp-drive; Andrew *Luc-Picard* preparing for battle stations and zooming southwards. The A Team are stuck in mission-limbo: race to catch the Enterprise or hang back and continue with the Hippo hunt? The Hippo plods on its merry way, oblivious.

We eventually meet up en route (more by luck and the need for strong black coffee, than any judgment) and attempt to stay together. The Galaxy takes the lead.

It was at this point the first great battle of the trip began. Despite being programmed up to the ying yang with directions, knowledge, maps and technology once only available to the US Military, the humble Tom Tom GPS navigation tool is no match for the map-reading talents of Andrew. We are led to this conclusion based on the reports of Andrew's insistence to announce junctions, direction changes, viewpoints or tourist snippets about one second before Madam Tom Tom can utter "*At the next junction...*".

Apparently, Madam Tom Tom gave up trying to outwit her cunning adversary; the drivers (hello Cynan and Dylan) were lulled into a false sense of directional well-being and duly

followed the now-barked orders from the passenger seat. The A Team Bus and the Hippo dutifully followed blindly, confident that the not-obvious route and excessive fuel consumption was leading to extra quality time in resort.

Such was Andrew's command of all things French cartographic, the journey to Bourg St. Maurice only takes four and a half hours longer.