

Velo Teifi Cycling Club

Tour of France 2009

The Chairman's Diary

(Le journal intime du Chairman)

Tuesday 21st July 2009

Day 5. Col de Petit St Bernard et Puncture numero trios et quatre.

Weather: scorchio.

A night on the lowest floor of the house for me. The rumpus of battle between the bear and Baron von Snoring Bean has proved too much, so it's a night of sticking (literally) to the *faux* leather couch and hiding under the duvet from the ear-buzzing flies. I wake up a bit grumpy.

Howard and I nip down town to buy yummy provisions for the evening meal (working assumption: Bourg will be mental tonight with the Tour circus in town) and are back in time to find everyone ready to go... Right behind you team.

We're all off to La Rosiere and the Col de Petit St Bernard. Well, almost. After exactly 1.6 minutes, Lucky How decides he wants to come out and play. Psssssssst! Puncture number 3. *Zut alors!* (not now Andrew, please). Despite my grumpiness I volunteer to return to the chalet (up *that* hill) and fetch a spare wheel and stuff. Howard and I rejoin the descent (me in one of the tour buses).

We rejoin the others at the bottom of the hill. Nearly all the others that is, Andrew has led a breakaway group to the Col. *Bon chance, mon Brave et merci pour votre patience...* Before departure, the message was left from *Herr Kapitan* that the spare wheel was one of the better wheels in the group and Lucky How might like to consider not using it... F**k. My grumpiness reaches new heights (depths?). We dispatch the remaining team to the Col and return to the Space Station to fix the puncture and cast necessary spells of doom and voodoo over Andrew's front wheel.

For the third time Howard and I descend *that* hill (in the bus); stashing the vehicle at a strategic point for the return home (cunning plan, Balderick) and make our way to the Col.

We reach La Rosiere and I leave Howard to see if I can catch any of the others. Wait a second... was that Lucky How I saw waving me off? No, couldn't have been...

I catch a few of the team but not long after, an over-officious *gendarme* informs me that the *la route ferme*. Arse. What to do? Wait here for several hours with no other distractions - like a bar or ice cream vendor or something. Or distract said *gendarme* and make a dash back down the mountain for La Rosiere? Hmm? "*Excusez-moi monsieur, regardez! An eagle!*" That's it, I'm off.

Wow. 4km of closed road, packed with race fans all cheering and taking photos. This is the closest some of us will ever get to experiencing life as a pro cyclist. A pro cyclist with the Gendarmes after him that is; pedal harder, dick head.

I pass Howard, he having now fixed puncture number 4...

Safe. *“Quatre grande bieres, s’il vous plait”*. And two pizzas. This is the life. Bring on the Caravan and the Race...









Post-race, the descent to Bourg St Maurice is a tale of traffic, people, nasty looking accidents and pumped fore-arms. Dylan sees nothing of it. How could you at 50mph? Loon.

Into Tasty Fooding [sic] for refreshments and freebies... Then the climb up *that* hill. I set a pressing pace, attempting to crush Jav-lar at an early stage. With everyone kicking hard and

settling down for a tough climb at pace, I nip off to the strategically parked Team Bus. A cunning stunt, I think you'll agree.

Andrew leads Dylan up an alternative route to the top. At the top, Dylan is pale and lifeless but still swearing. Yes Dylan, the alternative route is 3 miles at 10%... nice.

The evening sees the men take over the kitchen to prepare a gourmet delight for everyone's delectation. That's pizzas and salad to you. Plus some very nice salad dressings derived by Andrew and Barrie a.k.a. Gervais and Fanny Craddock.

Beer anyone? Hmmm? The slabs are remarkably untouched. Real men my a**e.