

## Before the Bike Ride

Peter first heard about the Tour of Menorca (Vuelta a Menorca) in 2010 and was keen to participate but, due to various circumstances, the first year that it became a feasible trip was 2013. The idea to go was hatched between Peter, Mark and Alec after a CTC Sunday ride when the threesome were enjoying a post-ride drink (or two). Peter cycled home fast and ran upstairs to his PC and began to search on flights and hotels. After a frustrating few minutes he was unable to find either and he gave up, phoning Mark to let him know that it was impossible to get there. Mark took up the challenge and within a short time had found Monarch flights which were perfect both for the time of the flights and the low cost. He also found the Hostel Jume which was low cost and had available ensuite single rooms meaning that each of them would not need to share the snoring of the others. Mark contacted Peter to let him know that the trip was all go, a big smile came across Peter's face and he ran downstairs and hugged his wife. Unfortunately just before Mark was about to book his wife reminded him that he had already made prior arrangements for the Saturday night and had bought tickets for a rock concert. Peter and Alec were very grateful for Mark's research but who could they get to take his place?

On the 13<sup>th</sup> August Alec sent an email to Mike, "Would you like to join the CTC trip to Menorca to cycle in the Menorca Sportive?" Mike searched on Google for information about the ride and found an article in Road Cycling UK about last year's ride. It looked very interesting but just for three nights which seemed a very short time to stop in Menorca. Unfortunately Mike was suffering from septic bursitis of the elbow and was banned by his doctor from cycling, playing tennis and even playing table tennis. Would his elbow be healed in time? Mike responded positively with the proviso that he might not make it due to the elbow.

Peter posted an article about the ride in Cycling Weekly on their CTC Teesside Facebook page, and contacted Mike and sent the link to the rides website:

<http://menorcacicloturista.com/vuelta-a-menorca/>

Mike looked through the information about the ride. The three days cycling distances were 30km, 110km and 58km. These distances didn't look too much for him but there were times against the rides showing a requirement for an average speed of about 16mph. This seemed very fast to maintain so it must be very flat. What about all the unfit old men & women that would enter? It couldn't actually mean that speed?

Peter and Alec discussed the biking options, (a) take their own bikes or (b) hire bikes. Peter researched the internet again and this time struck lucky finding "BikeMenorca" who would hire out excellent bike at a reasonable price. It was decided to hire bikes. Now everything was in place to go ahead and book the trip:

- Fly with Monarch from Leeds-Bradford airport – about £70
- Book into Hotel Jume – cheap and perfect for men not taking their wives – about £72
- Bikes booked through Fernando at BikeMenorca – about £52
- Entry fee for the ride – not too high – about £47

In early September Mike asked his doctor about cycling in the "Tour of Menorca". He said Mike shouldn't restart cycling till October and thought that Mike was too old to get fit enough for the ride in less than 3 weeks. Mike turned to cycling in the gym, laying pools of sweat all over the floor and rain showers onto anyone close enough if he swung my head.

By early October Mike restarted cycling and confirmed all his bookings – Mike was not going to miss an interesting ride and 4 days of fellowship with two good friends.

## The Route



**Friday October 18<sup>th</sup> 30km (18miles) 18 to 25 DegC**

Peter collected Mike and Alec at 4:30am from Alec's house and drove the 60 miles to Leeds-Bradford airport. From this point everything went smoothly: flight delayed slightly but plenty of time; transfer by taxi to the hostel; booking into the hostel with plenty of space for the bikes to be locked up; collected bikes from "Bike Menorca"; setting up bikes with own pedals. Mike asked at the bike shop how many people cycled in the "Tour of Menorca". The reply in Spanish translated to English was about 300. At last we had some feel for the size of the ride.

We were ready to cycle to the start of the ride in plenty of time. All we needed was to get to Ferial Poima-Maó. We asked directions of a local who thought it best to cycle down a steep hill to the port and then cycle back up again! We learnt later that there was an easy flat route.



We arrived at 3pm with only a few British there. It seemed very strange when 300 were expected. We began to count the cyclists as they arrived. Alec remarked, "Just 15 minutes to go and only 30 cyclists – very strange!" We were starting to wonder if the event was a joke especially when we went into the cycling centre to pay and no-one was there. However within the 15 minutes

over 200 cyclists had arrived and we cycled off as a peloton behind a pace-setting car.



The first stop to regroup was at Binibeca Vill Fishing Village and then we cycled back through Sant Lluís and onto Bodegas Binifadet for wine tasting. Initially it was unclear if there would be wine to taste but we then circled a few times to have several tastings. We finished back at the start, then cycled back to the hostel the short flat way and locked up the hire bikes in the back of their very deep garage. However

Peter was not keen for anyone to know that the bikes were there and covered the bikes in a small cloth.



There was a cycling reception starting at 7:30pm back at the Ferial Poima-Maó. We decided to walk and changed into normal clothes but oddly Alec & Peter were in long trousers on this warm evening with the temperature not forecast to drop below 18 DegC. Now Peter is from Hartlepool and they are a strange breed. He did not believe the forecast and wore his anorack just in case, with Alec also taking a long sleeve jumper. "Sensible" Mike just wore a short sleeve shirt and shorts with no socks.

On arrival we paid our fees and were ushered into a large room with seating for just over 100 people. Arturo, our host, gave a speech mainly in Spanish with just a bit in English. He then introduced various renowned cyclists who each gave a short speech in Spanish and then the Mahon Mayoress who also gave a speech in Spanish. We three clapped as loudly as the rest but never understood a word of what was being said (we had seen that there were prizes for all sorts of things so just a chance for the loudest clapper). By the time the speeches were over we were dying of hunger and thirst. We were not disappointed as outside there were endless pastries and red wine, and we did England proud by eating our fair share if not a bit more. Mike and Alec assumed that we would stroll back to the hostel and collapse in bed but Peter said, "I need my vegetables and beer". This was surprising as Peter is very slim with only minor signs of middle-age spread and not big signs like Mike of old-age spread. We strolled around in the moonlight till we found a café that sold vegetable tapas and beer. Peter was replete.

### Saturday October 19<sup>th</sup> 110km (69miles) 18 to 25 DegC

Our bikes were still there in the morning being protected by the small cloth inside the locked garage. We cycled to the Town Hall to find the square filled with a mass of bicycles. Various groups were proudly wearing identical bike



shirts. We saw some steps leading up to a platform where the winners would receive their prizes so we walked up there and posed as if we were the winners. We saw that this was where you signed in on an enormous piece of paper with a square for each name. We realised that the timing tags that we had been given had to be around our ankles – these were just to record the time ascending the two hills on the rides not the overall ride time.



The ride was due to start at 9am and just a minute or two afterwards we were off following a car that was to set the pace. We were near the back of the 249 cyclists but once we met the wider roads we began to move up the peloton. First Peter moved up then Mike passed him and at one point was not far from the front. Peter surged past Mike again with Alec going smoothly along keeping out of harm's way. After 10 miles Peter and Mike were cycling together when 2 bikes touched and fell onto the road. Peter and Mike cycled in the gap between the fallen bikes, determined not to fall as well. This incident made us all realise how careful we had to be. None of us had ridden in a peloton before and it did give us the feeling that we were cycling in the Tour de France that we had all watched on the TV. There was a sense of exhilaration but also apprehension. There were numerous Marshalls' cars and motor bikes and whenever we came to an intersection the traffic had been stopped. Twice on the next section Mike experienced his bike shaking violently and slowed in each case but then learnt that it was less likely to shake if he kept peddling. At the time it was frightening and an excuse for a slight gap opening to the peloton.



At 54km (34miles) the ascent of S'Enclusa began (2km and rising to 275m). A few (including Mike) stayed at the bottom content to watch the rest struggle upwards.

After a short time the leaders shot back down the hill and we continued to the food and drink stopping point at Recinto Ferial Es Mercadal (69km, 43 miles). We were each given a doggy bag with pastries, fruit and energy bars). After half



an hour the leading car positioned itself to restart and we lined up behind it. We set off as one long peloton again.

The speed increased as we set off back with the most cyclists still keeping in the peloton and Marshalls' cars providing the rolling road closures. At Sant Climent (91km) Mike had slipped just out of sight of the peloton and was joined by Wolfie (from Wolverhampton). We were directed to turn right by three ladies in Sant Climent but then all the Marshalls' cars and motorbikes drove past us fast. We lost our way and were advised after several miles to turn back by the Majorcan bike transfer driver (thankyou). We made our way directly to Mahon arriving just after the peloton at 14:10, almost to programme.

Mike was joined by Alec and Peter who had been searching for him. We retired to a café to relax and talk about World affairs over 3 half litres of beer. We cycled back to the hostel, ensured that bikes were covered in Peter's cloth, relaxed then met up at 7pm for beer and a meal in the idyllic Menorcan heat.

**Sunday October 20<sup>th</sup> 58km (36miles) 18 to 25 DegC**



The final cycling day arrived and we had to be at the Town hall for the 8:45am start. The peloton set off again right on time with Mike and Peter cycling near the back – finding it fairly easy to keep up. Alec moved up the field.

At 23.5km we reached the start of the ascent of Monte Toro (3km and rising to 358km). A few stayed at the bottom including Mike. At the top there was a drinks stop then the cyclists shot down the hill to regroup in Mercatel. From this point there were two hard climbs and then after an hour there was another regrouping stop to ensure that no-one was left behind. We continued on to Mahon, with Mike cycling hard with to remain attached to the peloton. We arrived at Mahon just before 12pm, almost on time.



Mike rejoined Alec and Peter, with Alec remarking, "This is the best sportive I have cycled in". We needed one small beer so chose the café outside our hostel. We didn't

have long as we had to shower then walk back to the Ferial Poima-Maó by 1:30pm for the Farewell lunch. We assumed that this lunch would be a minor affair as we thought all the Spanish cyclists would go home – how wrong we were to be proven!



### Farewell Lunch

We arrived back at the Ferial Poima-Maó on-time to find everyone sifting through the photographs that had been taken by the official photographers over the three days. Peter bought us one each.



Peter and Alec were very keen to be photographed with the renowned cycling guests so they persuaded two of the three to pose with us.



Alec & Peter with  
Fernando Escartin  
  
Finished 3rd overall  
in the  
1999 Tour de France

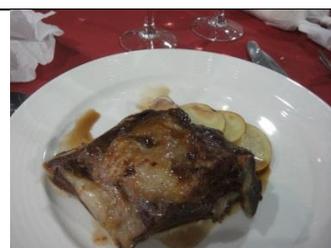


Peter, Mike & Alec  
with  
Antonio Vallori  
  
Stage winner of the  
Tour of Spain 1976



When we entered the dining hall we were astonished to see how large it was and that there were numerous tables with table plans showing which table each of us should join. We realised that 2 tables were reserved for the British. The tables were laid out with several bottles of wine and bottled water. We were joined by the other British and shared our views about the ride and weekend – all very positive.

Every time a bottle of wine was emptied it was replaced by another – wonderful! The food was also delicious with 4 courses served, with the main course being succulent lamb.



Arturo, our host, appeared at the front and began calling up groups for the presentation of certificates for cycling in the event. We soon realised that everyone would be called up including us three. Once Arturo had finished handing out the certificates he moved on to handing out the trophies of which there were many: oldest cyclist; oldest female cyclist; youngest cyclist; youngest female cyclist; family group trophy; etc. Finally Arturo thanked all the British who had cycled in the Tour of Menorca, and we all stood up and clapped him.



Menorca  
**13ª VOLTA**  
CICLOTURISTA INTERNACIONAL  
**A MENORCA**  
18-19-20 OCTUBRE 2013

Al Sr./Sra **SANDERSON, PETER**  
En Agradecimiento por su participación

Equipo: **INDEPENDIENTE**

Escalada a Enclusa: 0:09:43  
Escalada a Monte Toro: 0:20:22  
Tiempo Total: 0:30:05

Clasificación general: 166  
Clasificación categoría 23 **MASTER 55 MASCULINO**

## The Team



### **Mike collected a few comments from the British:**

Very interesting experience and a lot to learn. I will be back next year.

Lots of fun, great weekend, I will be back.

Good fun, everyone very friendly, enjoyed going up Monte Toro

Great event, very relaxed, well-organised, lots of fun, Menorca – really lovely island

Organisation fantastic; Arturo does a superb job

Very good indeed, weather excellent, course was good

**Peter:** I would like to express my thanks to Arturo and the Association Ciclotouristica Menorca for organising a fantastic weekend of cycling and making everyone feel welcome to their beautiful island.

**Mike:** A Big Thankyou to Arturo and all the Marshalls & Helpers for such a well-organised event creating a very enjoyable weekend.

**Arturo (host):** Thankyou very much to all the British people. I am very happy as all these years we have never had more than 20 British but this year 49.

**Mahon Mayoress:** Thankyou very much for coming – the British.

Mike Newton

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I have created a Youtube for this event – search on GASBAGSMike & Tour Menorca