



Clockwise: 182km on a Brompton! Needham Lake. Dunwich Beach



burger van, drawn by the sound of spitting oil and the smell of burger smoke. Round the corner, an espresso wagon poured shot after shot to the sound of pumping dance music. Faces were illuminated by the glow of the neon lights.

DAYBROKEN

I retrieved Grace from her poor-quality slumber, avoiding her tired gaze lest she turn me to stone, and we slid off into the dark once more. No more than ten minutes passed before click, click, click, click. What's that noise? A tack in my front tyre...

We performed a Formula 1 pit-stop to the sound of Dolly Parton, then trundled on once more. Before long, the early signs of the sunrise began to peak over the horizon. Spurred on by this, and a text from the initial group that they had long since arrived at the beach, eaten, and swum, we clacked through the gears and made a bit more progress. As the sun really began to stretch its legs, we happened across a lone, dishevelled cyclist on a blue Condor.

"Toby?"

"Jordan!"

This was no ordinary dishevelled cyclist but a friend I hadn't seen for years. And this is the real delight of the Dun Run. It's enjoyed by so many cyclists of all shapes, sizes, ages and backgrounds. There's no one type of person who rides it; it's such a welcoming event that everyone rides it. And because it's so well known, the likelihood of seeing someone you know is far greater than not. We chatted away the miles as the countryside whizzed by until we were stopped in

our tracks by the most astonishing scene: the full fire of the sun had crept over the horizon, cutting through the treeline, burning off the morning mist. It was a Constable made real. We stood and stared for what felt like hours until, reluctantly, we realised we needed to ride on.

We reached the point where my rose-tinted spectacles were doing us no good. After every hill, I was convinced that it was the last hill of the ride. From here on "it's laser flat all the way" I would exclaim, my memory playing cruel tricks. Then another crest would appear. Grace's mood began to pitch from zenith to nadir and back with each fall and rise of the road. Eventually it did flatten and, before long, the route plunged towards the sea. The café appeared in front of us like a mirage, and we ditched our bikes like we hated them to queue for plates piled high with fried carbs.

With our entries into the 2022 Dunwich Speed Breakfast Eating Competition filed, we staggered to the beach for a refreshing dunk in the sea.

I made my way to the lapping waves like a drunken John Wayne. Grace like an unwell crab. The cooling water did nothing for our minds or bodies, so we quickly retreated to the dunes for a snooze. I turned to ask Grace how she'd found her first Dun Run – and stopped. Her posture, crumpled, with her head in her hands, two feet from a bag of dog poo, said it all. ●

Do it yourself

The Dunwich Dynamo is free to ride but most people buy a route guide at the start for £2 to support the event. It's simply a case of turning up with some friends and going for a ride. The only thing worth booking is the return journey: Southwark Cyclists offer a return coach, with cycle transport, for £46.99.

