

Dunwich Dynamo FAQs.

2003: The Eleventh Dunwich Dynamo

What is the Dunwich Dynamo?

It's a barely organised, turn up and go 120 mile overnight on-road bicycle ride. It's not a race. It's unsupported, no van following. It's a long way for most of us, and there may be times when you, for a split second, wish you were tucked up in bed. But not for long, you'll love it.

How many people ride it?

170 did it last year. Only a couple dropped out along the way.

Who does it?

A lot of really excellent cyclists, but mostly your average bike-to-workers for whom this is a very long ride. A wonderfully mixed bunch of bikers. A challenge. Most of them will have done day rides of 60-80 miles. 120 flattish ones is much easier than 80 hilly ones.

How long does it take?

Most get to Dunwich between 7am and 9am the next morning.....plus or minus 10 hours then. Depends on your pace and number of stops.

What's it like?

Unforgettable atmosphere, it's a friendly adventure with great people along surprisingly traffic free country lanes. People settle into bunches at the pace they like and give each other the mental and, if possible, the mechanical support all the way to the sea. I like the glimpses of village Saturday night and the odd throbbing marquee in the middle of nowhere. The sense of very real achievement at the end is a huge lift that will stay with you. The worst bit is missing a night's sleep. But that's also the best bit. We ride into the sunrise.

When?

The next Dynamo, DD11, is on the weekend of 12/13 July 2003. The coach back is booked already, so is the early cafe opening.

Since when?

People have been riding London to Dunwich on the July Saturday nearest the full moon since 1993. Legend has it that a few half-civilised City couriers just headed east after a post-work session one balmy Friday evening....and kept going till they hit the sea. Splash.

Where is Dunwich?

Dunwich is about 200km (120 miles) north east of London on the Suffolk coast between Southwold and Aldeburgh. The wind should push us there.

What is Dunwich?

A thousand years ago wool-rich Dunwich almost rivalled London. Coastal erosion means the medieval metropolis is now half a mile offshore, on a quiet night they say you can hear the

watery tolling of the lost church bells. It's a great reminder that nothing stays the same, the ride gets shorter every year.

Where is the start?

The ride meets at the Pub on the Park, Martello Street, London Fields, Hackney, London E8 ([020 7275 9586](tel:02072759586)).

<http://www.streetmap.co.uk/streetmap.dll?G2M?X=534754&Y=184363&A=Y&Z=1>

At what time?

8pm for a 9 pm start. That's PM. Saturday evening. 12 July. Some of us will meet at Cutty Sark Gardens, Greenwich, at 7pm for the canally ride to the start. Remember that the foot tunnel lifts won't be working.

How do I follow the route?

You'll be given a route sheet at the start (minimum £1 donation to help cover some costs) but the route is unsigned. OS Travelmaster sheet 6 (East Midlands and East Anglia) covers the route.

We hope to put some lanterns out along part of the way.

Follow the line of red rear-lights ahead.

What's the route like?

It leaves London surprisingly quickly, is all on tarmac, and once through Epping Forest, it's mostly unlit county lanes all the way with a few villages and small towns.

Topography/Contours/Nasty bits?

Several short sharp hills, but mostly very flat. All tarmac.

What do I need?

You'll need lights of course but it's a full moon on Sunday and there are so many stars. If you use city LED's you'll sometimes want to tuck in behind someone with a beam.....it can be dark out there and unnerving in the tree tunnels. Bring at least spare batteries, a pump, a spare inner tube or two.

Any stops?

About 60 miles out the village hall at Great Waldingfield is specially opened by lovely people and you can buy hot drinks and basic food there. Coming out into the breaking dawn makes it seem like the new day it is.

What happens if my bike or I break down?

There's no following magic bus to sweep you up or to mend your bike but fellow riders can often work wonders. The ride is unsupported. You are on your own. If you're in trouble, expect

help from fellow riders. But if you just get too tired or a knee gives out or whatever, then you'll have to find a lift or cab to get you to the nearest station.

What happens at the finish?

We head for Dunwich Beach. The wake-up swim is such a treat. So bring your swimmie. Or not. And breakfast at the very good beach cafe that opens specially for us at 6am for cooked ones (and morphs into a fish and chip shop for lunch). Most then snooze on the shingle a little, then have a beer or two.

But how do I get home?

A few seasoned riders just turn round and spin back to London. Most get the coach or train. Some just cycle up the coast for a long weekend.

Train?

Darsham station is 4 miles away. The single fare is £26.50 into Liverpool Street. Trains go every hour. And don't take many bikes. There are more trains from Ipswich 30 miles away. £21.30 single. (The route-sheet gives the best way back to Ipswich). And it's Sunday....fave day for engineering works on the line and bussed bits that don't carry bikes.

Coach?

We strongly recommend the specially hired luxury coach for the snooze home. It has a loo, tea/coffee and really comfortable seats. The bike trailer and extra van has loads of space for all the bikes. Tandems and recumbents fit easily. If you're worried about your pristine paint job then bring a wrapping sheet or blanket or similar.

We work the coach on a not-for-profit basis, transparent books. We of course need to cover costs. If a surplus develops it gets split between the London School of Cycling and Greenwich Cyclists to help pay for the glow-lights and the food. If a loss develops, I'm in trouble. No refunds though. The coach leaves Dunwich Beach at 1pm and gets to the Embankment in London (Temple tube station) about 2 hours later. And sorry, no, we can't add in extra stops. Some of us then find a pub. Optional extra.

Coach tickets are £12 if paid for before 30 June 2003, and £20 afterwards. That's the same advanced fare as in 2002 but late booking costs more to encourage early booking and easier estimating of numbers.

Early booking is advised....seat numbers are of course limited.

To book a coach seat either:

send a cheque for at least £12 per person (extra money donated split as above):

Cheques payable to Greenwich Cyclists (that's important please).

You can order a seat by phoning or emailing me, I'll hold it for a week by which time I should get your payment to confirm. Please make sure you sign the cheque and that you send me your phone number/email address too. I'll then email you a receipt and have a ticket ready for you on the day.

My Survival tips:

Do some longish rides beforehand.....the Greenwich Cyclists do a lot: see Rides and Events on this website.

Don't overdo the alcohol etc for a few days beforehand.

Pack spare layers of clothes, it can be very warm or chilly or damp or wet.

Money. Always handy.

Jeans have lumpy under-seams that you don't notice for a few miles. Then you notice.

Tools: at least a pump and a couple of spare inner tubes. Tyre levers too.

Make sure your bike is in good nick. Give it a good clean and service a few days before. On the day, give it another look and, for example, flip it over and check the tyres for those infiltrating little bits of glass. If you've been thinking about getting new tyres, splash out before the ride.

Lights: you'll need them. Dynamo? LED's can last all night, but bring spare batteries anyway, tuck in behind someone with a beam for those tree-tunnel lane stretches.

Saddle?

Apply Vaseline, cream or calledula or similar if/before your bits get sore. Recumbent riders, they boast, needn't bother.

Carbo-loading works for me: a huge pasta meal the night before. A friend of mine swears by cutting out caffeine for a few days beforehand so that the 3am coffee really jolts.

Drink water before you get thirsty, snack and nibble before you get hungry. That way you'll avoid hitting the spirit-draining brick wall of no energy.

Don't sprint off with the skinny greyhounds unless you are one. Settle into a group doing a pace you like. If it turns out slow, dance in the pedals and catch a quicker group. Bit too fast? Drop off the group and wait to be caught up.

And just love it.

Barry Mason
15 April 2003