



THE GRANNY THAT CYCLED FROM LAND'S END TO JOHN O' GROATS

Candy Jar is pleased to announce its nineteenth 'Book of the Month', *End to End*.

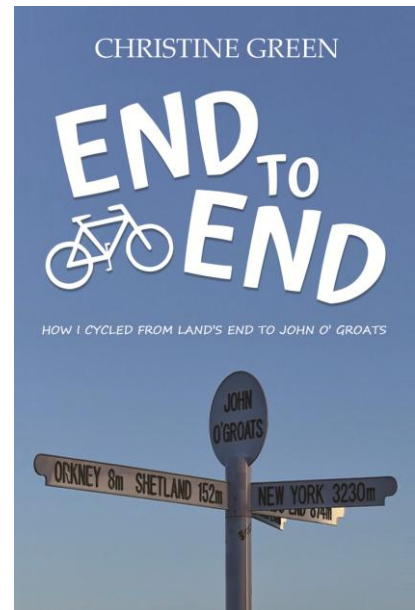
Published with the help and support of Candy Jar's award-winning partner imprint Jelly Bean Books, this book recounts the adventure of a lifetime as 70-year-old granny, Christine Green, cycles solo on her electric bike from Land's End to John o' Groats.

Christine from Monmouthshire first got the idea to cycle the route between Land's End (the most southerly tip of the UK, in Cornwall) to John o' Groats (situated on the extreme north-eastern tip of Scotland) after she had a bike for her 70th birthday.

"It was on a visit to Alcudia that I truly fell in love with an electric bike. The distinct advantage of an electric bike is that the motor helps propel you along, and cycling uphill becomes a dream. People sometimes say, 'Ah, but that's cheating!' to which I always reply, 'Yes, but you still have to pedal.' Other advantages are that cycling on an electric bike is easier on your back, neck and joints. At the end of my week away I had cycled the equivalent of Land's End to Bristol. As I sat on the plane watching the shores of Mallorca recede below me, I gave myself a mental pat on the back. I really could do it!"

On her return to the UK, Christine was eager to find more about cycling and decided to purchase her own bike.

"I researched electric bikes and decided that I needed something fairly solid, with tyres that were as puncture proof as possible. A good range of battery distance and waterproof panniers were also top of my list. Gradually my distances increased and, little by little, I began to have a sneaking suspicion that I could take on a bigger challenge."



It wasn't long before Christine had taken the plunge and decided to cycle the length of mainland Britain. The route, known as LEJoG, is a demanding mix of urban and rural riding, challenging even the most experienced cyclists with its dizzying climbs and precipitous descents – not to mention the British weather! And just like many 70 year olds, Christine had other factors to consider.

"I was encouraged by my daughter, Helen, to think about my medical history, to reflect that I had had my share of ups and downs, and perhaps my nether end might not be too comfortable being on a saddle day after day for many miles. This was true. At the age of thirty-three, pre-cancer cells in my womb led to a hysterectomy, followed in later years by a rectocele and cystocele, when the walls of my bowel and bladder, missing the support of the womb, began to cave in, requiring operations to prop them up again. Add in gall bladder removal, and spinal discs complaining about the strain of years of heavy farm work, Helen gently suggested that it might be better if I just continued to follow other peoples' adventures and not risk doing further damage to myself."

With characteristic grit, Christine decided to contact her GP to see if anything in her medical history would hold her back.

"I expected a negative reply, reasoning that if I thought that I needed drugs to do this madness, then I should already know it was a bad idea. But when she telephoned me, I could hear the excitement in her voice! She said it was a wonderful idea, and that she would prescribe some anti-inflammatory tablets, adding that, when I had finished my ride, I would feel simply wonderful."

As a Scot, exiled in Wales for over sixty years, pedalling home seemed the only way to go, but at first she didn't want to do it alone.

"I had never considered cycling one thousand miles on my own. There would be so many obstacles to overcome that the notion was simply overwhelming. I would have had no idea about how to go about such a venture and so I decided to investigate companies that offered support services. Imagine my disappointment when the secretary phoned to say that I was unsuitable to be included in their programme. She would not give the reason for my rejection. I had felt that we had developed a rapport, so much so that I had never considered there would be a question about my suitability. Was it my age, or the fact that I had an electric bike? I would never know, but as I put down the receiver, I said, 'Sod it, I'll do it myself!'"

Soon Christine made plans for the adventure of a lifetime. Her secret plans were beginning to feel very real!

"It was January 2017, and I could think of no better way to pass the dreary winter months than planning a one thousand mile cycle ride covering the length of Great Britain. What fun I had, reading and re-reading what had now become my two bibles. So began my training, throughout which I learned a lot about muscles, how they function and the benefits of training in water, which lends its support to the body. Soon I was walking up and down the pool, frontwards, backwards, sideways, marching up and down, swimming with flippers, swimming relaxed style.

Christine finished it after thirty days in the saddle, just shy of her 71st birthday and feeling 17 again!

"There would be moments of doubt and times when I felt very lonely. Throughout my one thousand miles on this journey I needed every ounce of stubbornness and determination as I battled into relentless icy rain which pelted into me, accompanied by a supernatural wind, both of which left me sapped of all energy and in tears. En route I broke down on Dartmoor, I received illicit offers from strangers, masked men with guns, hypothermia in the remote Scottish Highlands and accidentally gate crashed a funeral where I ended up comforting one of the mourners. Like the roads I travelled on my journey had its ups and downs. But it was all my choice to undertake what I did, and I had plenty of well wishers cheering me onwards."

Christine raised £7,000 for Women V Cancer and was quite surprised by the reception she received when she returned home.

"I was suddenly in demand as a speaker, something which I was initially hesitant about but which I came to enjoy, and at the end of most talks someone would approach me to tell me about their cycling days, or to say that I had inspired them to take on their own challenges. I could not have achieved all that I did without the support of so many people, from the early planning stages and throughout my ride. People have lauded me with praise, but I deserve none of that. The people who deserve the praise are those fighting illnesses, of all kinds, often without complaining. All that I had to do was to keep pedalling!"

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