

# Way of the Roses - Morecambe to Bridlington

31 March to 1 April 2012

## Stats:

Carnforth to Morecambe to get to start	6 miles
Morecambe to Linton on Ouse	104 miles
Linton on Ouse to Bridlington end of route	74 miles
End to Bridlington Station	1 mile
Edinburgh Waverley to Home	15 miles
Total distance in 2 days	200 miles
Total Distance on route	178 miles
Average speed when moving	10.5 mph
Hours moving	19 hours
Day 1 set off time on route	06:50
Day 1 finish on route	22:20
Day 2 start time on route	06:45
Day 2 finish on route	16:10

## People & Bikes:

Aidan Allcock	Giant CRS 3.0 Hybrid - 35c tyres
Simon Allcock	Falcon Team Replica (1989) - 23c tyres and a wobbly pannier rack
Iain Hunter	Kona Cinercone MTB (2009) with locked front suspension and featuring a Brookes B17 Saddle – 1.9” Schwalbie Land Cruiser tyres

## Day 1 - 31 March 2012

The day started with my alarm waking us at 5am. Simon had arrived at about midnight and although we got to bed pretty quickly it was still only about 4 hours sleep.



We intended to set off at 5:45am and my faffing only caused us to be 10 mins late. We parked at Carnforth and, with the bikes laden with lights, panniers and tents we headed off into the cold early morning to find the start 6 miles further on in Morecambe.

Photos taken at the start sign, away we went with it just getting light. Simon was on Iain's Falcon road bike because his had packed in the week before and Iain was on his Kona MTB. The slicks Iain had intended to use had split, so it was knobbly tires all the way. I was on my Giant 3.0 CRS Hybrid with 35c tyres and bar end extensions for a more comfortable ride.

The first stretch from Morecambe to Caton was pleasant, if a little cold, all along urban and then wooded cycle tracks along the Lune. We were disappointed that the bacon butties we were expecting at Caton didn't happen because the stall wasn't open until 9am. Not wanting to hang around for an hour we had some cereal bars and jaffa cakes and were off again.

Then the first climb came, which gave us taste of things to come. Nothing too strenuous but we all had to go to the granny gears to get up, my derailleur catching slightly on the spokes sent me into irrational fits of hysterical giggling, which sapped my strength.



Next stop was Hornby where we stopped at the butchers for some pies. None of us could be bothered to get spoon out, but they really hit the spot and were worth our burnt mouths.

After some undulating countryside, we made our first wrong turn at Clapham. The route directed us along an off road section that looked unsuitable, so we doubled back trying to find the alternative route. After a couple of wrong turns we found the right road and were on our way again, only to take another wrong turn at Austwick ending up back on the A65. Rather than double back we took an alternative route into Settle via the B6480 along busier roads than intended.

We hit Giggleswick, where my cousin Mark, went to boarding school and then Settle at about 11am for an early lunch at the Co-op at mile 35. Fuelled up on sandwiches and chocolate, and after some minor confusion over the route out of Settle, we hit the steepest climb of the entire ride.

The double << signs on the map did not do this climb justice and we all had to dismount at one point, only to find we still slipped backwards even when pushing the bikes. We stopped at the top and took some photos and then enjoyed a great downhill stretch on mostly straight roads where we picked up some speed. Simon feared losing his back end on the Falcon and took the descent more carefully.



Cracoe was next on the list after negotiating some quiet twisting lanes, mostly on the flat. We ignored the Devonshire Arms pub (actually, we stopped and debated whether to go in) because it was still a bit early to eat again and we needed to make up some time after the steep climbs. It was around here, I think, that Simon had a slight mechanical with his panniers. It would have been a lot worse had Iain not had an appropriate nut and bolt with him, so it was quickly fixed. I made a mental note to make sure to pack a variety of fixings on the next trip.

A pleasant few miles followed past Grassington, Thorpe and Burnsall, passing several nice pubs with many cyclist outside in the sunshine. We then hit an unexpectedly steep climb near Applewick followed by a long hard slog for about 5 miles to the top of Greenhow in Nidderdale

(Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Simon and Iain chatted to a few club members out for a Saturday ride but by the time we got to the top I think Iain's thoughts were less about the 'Outstanding Natural Beauty' and more about getting off his bike and selling it to next car that passed him in return for a lift to civilisation. We needed a break and so we headed down a very fast, steep downhill stretch to Pateley Bridge and the Royal Oak (thanks to Google street view for reminding me of the pub name!). This was a great pub and served food all day, so we all tucked into sausage and mash with lashings of gravy and coke and tea.

It was 4:30pm and decision time. Iain had looked particularly tired after the last climb and we were at mile 62 of the 97 we had planned to cover on day 1. It had taken us 10 hours. We discussed the various options of splitting the tents or Iain taking the lift offered by one of the club members who was driving to York later. However, the meal was just what Iain needed and I must admit, I felt ready for anything after 3 large sausages, mash and veg. So we decided to go on with the approach of "we'll get there when we get there", much to Iain's credit.

So on we went and after a brief stop at the Spar for provisions and money, we hit another steep climb coming out of Pateley Bridge. This was much easier after our meal and we made short work of it past Brimham Rocks, which according to Simon was a great place to go climbing. I suggested we take a look, but was told in no uncertain terms to concentrate on the task in hand! It was my turn to feel a bit sick and dizzy at this point but some jelly beans soon sorted me out.

With the last major climb of the trip over, we made good time along quiet roads to the visual highlight of the trip, Fountains Abbey. The route went straight through the grounds and past the Abbey, which was deserted and wonderfully picturesque in the early evening sun.

We stopped again in the centre of Rippon for some Red Bull and to attach our lights as it would shortly be going dark. The caffeine energy drinks really hit the spot and at mile 78, the end of day 1 was in sight. Unfortunately that's when it all started to go wrong.

First we took a wrong turn at Boroughbridge in the dark and only realised our mistake when we found ourselves heading towards Dishforth Airfield. After retracing our steps for a mile and messing about trying to find the right road, we were on our way again.

The second mistake was ignoring the clearly signposted 'Road Closed' signs. We continued with the "we're on bikes so we should be able to get through somehow" attitude until we got to the six foot high fencing that stretched completely across the road with nowhere to squeeze through. We even walked along the adjoining field to find a way round, but to no avail. Simon bravely crawled under a hedge for a closer look, but couldn't figure out in the dark why the area was so tightly closed off. There were some diggers, but nothing unusual. It was time to leave quickly when Simon set some dogs off, so we legged it with the sound of barking following us up the lane. It was left to our imagination what clandestine operations were afoot beyond the closed road.

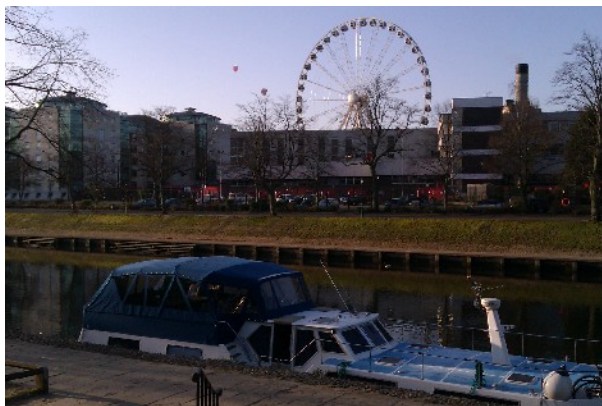
Unfortunately, the two detours cost us seven miles extra riding and by the time we reached the campsite at Linton on Ouse it was 10:20pm. I'm sure the campsite was nice on the banks of the Ouse, but we had use our imagination in the dark. With tents erected we headed for a pint of Guinness and a slice of quiche (all they had as the chef had gone home). The bar was almost empty so we were able to relax before hitting the sack for 5 hours sleep.

## Day 2 - 1 April 2012

My alarm woke me at 5:15am and I was cold. The temperature must have hit zero as the tent had frosted over in the night. After a quick wash and change, we decamped in the dark, but were very slow, perhaps because of the dark, cold or tiredness or a combination of all three. I don't think we set off until 6:45am, but Iain's rice puddings were great, so nobody minded too much. Off into the cold early morning we cycled with dreams of bacon sandwiches on the road to come.

I hadn't anticipated it being quite so cold (around 2 degrees) on the 11 mile stretch along off road cycle paths into York, so all my hands and feet went numb. When we reached York I took my gloves off to read the map, and, against my wishes, feeling returned to my hands in the form of white hot agony. I felt faint, so I dismounted, sat down for a while and then passed out, which Iain and Simon found most alarming. After a few minutes the nausea passed and after some jelly beans and sports drink I felt able to carry on, so off we went in search of a cafe. As it was early Sunday morning, nothing was open, so we ended up at a Morrisons petrol station shop without even a coffee machine or microwave. So it was sandwiches and sausage rolls for breakfast, with the disappointment of not finding a hot cup of coffee and a bacon roll. Where are the McDonald's when you need them?

It began to warm up as we headed for Stamford Bridge (I kid you not). There was an unexpected off-road section along a bridle path just before Stamford Bridge which Simon found difficult on his road bike. There was some deep sand in parts and we had to take it slowly. There was a sign at the end of it indicating that it was an alternative route. Alternative to what, we wondered?



After that we made good time on some long straight flat roads with no traffic and only the occasional poorly designed 'bike gate' to contend with on the way to Pocklington. We stopped for a Red Bull and crisps at mile 127 and away we went up another hill. This was nothing like the hills of the previous day and we made short work of it in the warming sunshine. We took the opportunity to take several layers of clothing off and continued down a long straight descent where we didn't need to pedal for miles, encountering many other cyclists out for a day ride.

We came across a cracking tea stop at Hutton Cranswick quite by accident after I noticed a sign for tea & coffee and cyclists welcome. The tea room was attached to the Cranswick Garden Centre and we sat outside with a really good cuppa and a slice of cake. For me, this was the highlight of the trip.

Next came what seemed like a thousand level crossings as we criss crossed the railway line at Driffield and the unfortunately named Nafferton, after the even more unfortunately named Little Bustard Farm. We were on the last fold of the map with 15 miles to go.

We were making good time, but the ride had one last obstacle to throw at us, a steep climb. So back into the granny gears we went and ground it out. Then down into Bridlington, time was running out and the town streets seemed to go on forever before we got to the sea. It was tempting to stop at the first signpost we saw at the seafront, but we pressed on to the actual finish about half a mile further on, scattering holidaymakers this way and that as we ploughed along the busy promenade. It was a little more stressful at the finish than we would have liked.

Then a quick stop for photos at the finish at 4:10pm before heading on for another mile through the bustling town to find the train station. Tired but happy, Iain bought us all a quick beer to celebrate our achievement, which we downed in 10 minutes and then boarded our trains. Simon and I to Doncaster and then Edinburgh and Cambridge respectively, and Iain to Seamer and then several other changes on his way to pick up his car in Carnforth.

My 15 mile ride from Edinburgh to Rosyth (because the Fife trains don't run late on a Sunday) was thankfully uneventful and I arrived home at midnight.

## **Overall**

The signage along the route was good, and allowed us to navigate for long sections without referring to the map. It could have been better at the odd junction and roundabout, particularly where we needed to change lanes in advance of the junction. The roads were good throughout, apart from a couple of short unexpected off road sections, and were mainly very quiet with hardly any traffic, making riding 2 or even 3 abreast possible for long periods. Stretches along dedicated cycleways were also welcome, with only the odd dog walker or runner or running dog walker to contend with.

The road closure at Lower Dunsforth really knocked us back, but that's our fault for ignoring the signs. I was disappointed not to get a bacon butty at any point along the route, plus there were no MacDonalds, Burger Kings or KFCs to be seen.

Day one was really tough with what turned out to be 110 miles over some pretty hilly roads. Day 2 was much easier with only 72 miles to the finish along mostly flat quiet roads.

The challenge of doing it in 2 days was made more stressful by having to catch a specific last train at 5pm on the Sunday. This meant that we had one eye on the time throughout both days

and didn't stop for as long as we might for proper hot food. It also meant particularly early mornings with very little sleep and hardly any beer at the end of day 1 (a mixed blessing).

Simon and Iain felt it would be best as a 3 day ride, and while I agree to an extent (e.g. the potential for beer time), it would be less of a challenge.

Overall I really enjoyed my first multi-day ride and valued the camaraderie of cycling with Simon and Iain.

