

The Great North Run June 2017

Such was the excitement at the prospect of three great days of biking up t'north, that, as Bonnie Tyler said,



we were living in a powder keg and giving off sparks in the sunny but prosaic environs of McDonalds in Walsgrave. The nine of us endured a pretty uneventful journey up M6, well, M6 is M6, roadworks, delays and stop go for no apparent reason but it could have been a lot worse and it gave us an opportunity to use the Marcus Method of filtering. At Charnock Richard Services we

topped up on fuel for exactly 20p a litre more than I had paid at Morrisons a few hours earlier, proof if any were needed, that a reasonable profit margin is an unknown concept at Welcome Break. As we approached The Lakes, the fells had their typical glowering mantle which can easily be mistaken for rain but happily turned out to be little more than low cloud on the tops. However, so chilly was it over Kirkstone Pass that some of us wimps switched on heated grips to supplement flimsy summer gloves.



The Youth Hostel in Patterdale was light and airy and now is a good time to say, hand on heart, that I have never shared a room with eight quieter more refined guys. Off to the pub for a convivial evening and we were on the road by 9 on Saturday morning. Blue skies, blue lakes, golden sun, bright green fells. Considering he lived just down the road, old Wordsworth got it so wrong to think that *Earth has not anything to show more fair* than standing on Westminster Bridge when all he had was open the curtains and look out of his window.

Without boring with a list, suffice to say we saw most of the lakes, staggered up and down all the passes and travelled every road that had a view worth looking at and of course, dear to all our hearts, passed but sadly didn't stop at,



Beatrice Potter's cottage. It is however a truth universally acknowledged that a Lakeland Mile is considerably longer than your ordinary Statute Mile and that fact combined with the plague of lunatic cyclists that hid around every blind corner meant it was well after 5 before we spat the grit of the Lakes from our treads and revelled in the joy of using some proper tarmac as we headed for Kendal.

The delight of the almost empty A684 through Sedburgh & Hawes and some truly spectacular scenery with stone walls and ancient field barns makes a revisit imperative.

Unsurprisingly there was a bit of head-scratching when it came to finding the route to Grinton Lodge because it barely passed for a road being single track with a nice bed of gravel running down its centre. Appropriately called Long Road for much of its 8 mile length, by 7pm, with the temperature still in the high twenties and fatigue setting in, I found the simplest manoeuvre disproportionately demanding as we pressed on over the lonely moors.

Grinton Lodge, perched on top of a hill, is a 19th century partially crenellated hunting lodge and at first sight too good for the likes of me. Built around a central courtyard with spectacular views,



internally it offers a maze of corridors and small rooms. A much needed shower, a trot down the hill and we were much restored sitting at a table with a pint in front of us.

Sunday was even hotter than Saturday and my bike showed 29C for much of the day. For the ornithologists I spotted grouse, curlew and whimbrels as we crossed great swathes of moorland towards Kettlewell. Then it was through Bronte country to Haworth, down onto Saddleworth Moor and into bustling Holmfirth. Father's Day duties and other engagements claimed three of our number and we were down to a cosy six by the time we romped down into the Peak District to lunch

and refuel in Congleton. From there it was a reasonably straightforward route to Ashbourne and Lichfield where Nigel (who is also highly skilled at picking bikes up) led us, to make our farewells at Bassetts Pole.

Trevor promised us spectacular roads and some of the best scenery in England and he didn't let us down. True, we suffered the odd setback and technological glitch but it didn't put me off and I'll be putting my name down for Trev's next outing if he'll take me.

Thanks to Trev for having the foresight to book a table at the packed White Lion along with all his other preparation and planning and to everyone else for being good company. As I always say, generally speaking people are really nice but CWAMs are just that little bit nicer.

There are lots of better pictures of the trip on our Facebook page and prog rocker Chris has loaded some video footage on YouTube. Crummock Water to Buttermere - https://youtu.be/x_WPhTYJX-8 and Hardknott Pass - <https://youtu.be/moacUsdM5KY>