

John O'Groats to Lands End (*annotated*) Journal

- 8 Day Ride 2 – 9 April 2010

Mervyn Jones (49)

The Route: www.bikemap.net/route/445843

Leg	estimated distance	Ascent	Descent	Actual distance	time	Ave Speed	Max Speed
				22.5	02:30:00	9	
1	98	7001	7003	98.2	07:44:00	12.6	29.5
2	103	8709	8409	107.4	07:00:00	15.2	32.9
3	108	8584	8173	115.9	07:48:00	14.8	30.7
4	100	6799	7484	107.5	08:50:00	12.1	26.8
5	127	4887	4683	133.1	10:44:00	12.4	26.5
6	99	4731	5018	103.5	06:30:00	15.8	35
7	98	6135	5675	100.3	06:54:00	14.5	38
8	96	8044	8329	98.4	06:31:00	15	35.7
	829	54890	54774	864.3		14.05	

Ascent and descent as measured by MemoryMap OS edition version 5

Couriered Bike up to Wick (with thanks to DLF Trifolium and W&A Geddes in Wick for their help). Flew to Wick and reassembled bike on 1 April then cycled 16 miles with crazy side-winds – took over 2 hours! Stayed at Seaview Hotel and cycled to Duncansby Head.

Day 1 John o Groats to Alness

Lunch at Timespan museum (www.timespan.org.uk), Helmsdale very good & friendly. Passed Glenmorangie distillery. Took the high road to Alness (*from Tain via Scotsburn*), nice end to day. Lovely chalet at B&B 1st night in Alness.

Conditions: Wet in John o Groats but no rain. Very strong southerly headwind throughout whole of day.

Day 2 Alness to Pitlochry

Climbed into the Cairngorms – back road was interesting (*B9154*), bleak and quiet with lots of snow but little wind (*Passed 2 trains that had been stranded in drifts the day before*). Nice grub in Aviemore at outdoor shop and bought bum bag (*to redistribute some weight over very skittish frontwheels – speed downhill was severely compromised by a wobble before this*) and waterproof socks. Freezing headwind and hail after summit on drop into Blair Atholl and Pitlochry.

Conditions: Damp start to day followed by rain before I passed Inverness and then good but cold (could have done with sunglasses in some parts) until Drummochter Summit then freezing hail.

Day 3 Pitlochry to Abington

Glad I took the planned route through Crieff (*A822 and B8033*) – lovely (start to day and) scenery not too much wind and passed by Waterford Crystal. Lunch with Tim & Morag who met me after mixup in Stirling. Second half of run was dull. Major roadworks and single lane contraflow traffic (*A803*) and me for 2 miles to strikingly dull Cumbernauld. Navigated through Airdrie, Motherwell and Hamilton and rained for last 20 miles to Abington.

Conditions: Rain and strong headwind wind for last 30-40miles through Lowther Hills.

Day 4 Abington to Kendal

Raining hard and very windy. Took a wrong turn in Beattock and hit pothole blowing front inner tube. Changed tube (*with my spare tube*) in rain and very unstable as not fully inflated. Met Andy on the road and he got a new spare tube for me and we met up again in Gretna green for lunch. Made it into Windland (*England*) and trudged through Cumbria (*down A6*) and so windy over Shap that I didn't stop for photo at top (*there's actually no sign in the layby so could have been anywhere!*) Made it to Kendal as darkness was falling Hotel was nice with sauna & Jacuzzi but cold room and wet gear next day.

Conditions: Yep, Rainy and very strong headwind

Day 5 Kendal to Telford

Rear tube expired 10 yards from hotel in Kendal as a result of yesterday's pothole. Lucky to have made it all the way to Kendal (as the valve had snapped in two). Longest day. Lunch after 66 miles at very dull pub just after Wigan (*Golborne*). Plodded on to Caroline's in Wellington (Telford). Last 15 miles the best as wind dropped but getting very dark and finished at 8.20pm. Accompanied by a white owl flying next to me for about 400m on A442.

(Picked this as longest stretch as the first day with net downhill rather than uphill.)

Conditions: Still a headwind but not as strong as last few days.

Day 6 Telford to Bristol

Down to Bristol – a doddle. Cloudy but dry and only 15mph side wind. Lunch at nice café/sweet shop in Tewksbury. Bristol a nightmare to cycle in with traffic but arrived mid afternoon. (*Some stretches were familiar as I'd been on these roads for training runs over winter. For a major road, the A38 has to be the worst for potholes and surface hazards*)

Conditions: Less wind but still cold

Day 7 Bristol to Oakhampton

Lovely day and 1st 50 miles very flat (via Weston-super-Mare) but still cool breeze. Lunched early at 11.30am at Apple Mill Cider Factory after Taunton. Second 50 miles very hilly with two very steep gradients between Tiverton and Crediton (*A3072*) and just before Oakhampton (*B3215*). First day I was able to take my jacket off (pm).

Day 8 Oakhampton to Lands End

A 'shortcut' out of Oakhampton on the Granite Way sent me off on wrong road to Tavistock but 12 miles of country lanes were preferable to the drudge of the A30. Made good time to Fraddon for lunch then final push. Passed by Marion and kids with 4 miles to go and nearly crashed showing off (*note the road is chained off to funnel cars passed the paybooth for the car park – I didn't spot this until too late and burst through the chains which, fortunately, turned out to be plastic. Could have been very embarrassing end to the ride*).

Some Random Stats and facts

Carlisle – follow your nose rather than the A6 signs

Lancashire – a place for everyone (apparently)

Lancaster – cycling city

Nantwich – hard to escape from

Oakhampton – a nice place

Roadworks encountered =7

Funeral corteges passed =3
Punctures = 2 (same pothole 2 separate wheels)
Falls = 2 (trying to turn on a punctured 23mm tyre not advisable in clip-ons, kerbed the bike in Kendal after tiring day trying to find the hotel)

A396 is worse road than A38 but not as busy.
Posting energy foods and spare maps onto overnight stops worked well and saved weight / volume in rack bag(Giant 13 litre).
Navigated by hard copy maps rather than GPS (some interesting detours but mainly in built up areas and not as many as I expected!).

Accommodation details

I'd happily recommend every place I stayed:

Seaview Hotel
John O'Groats, Caithness, Scotland, KW1 4YR
Tel. & Fax +44 (0)1955 611 220 E-Mail: www.seaviewjohnogroats.co.uk/

Westmore Bed & Breakfast
9 Novar Road Alness IV17 0QQ
Tel: 01349 884647 E-Mail: m_easson@hotmail.co.uk

Dorothy Stewart
5 Windsor Gardens Pitlochry PH16 5BE
Tel: +44 (0) 1796 474351 E-Mail: info@windsorgardensbedandbreakfast.co.uk

Days Inn Abington M74
Welcome Break Svc Area J13M74 Lanarkshire, ML12 6RG UK
E-Mail: abington.hotel@welcomebreak.co.uk

Riverside Hotel
Beezon Road Kendal Cumbria LA9 6EQ
+44 (1539) 734861
E-Mail: http://securebooking.eviivo.com/MyWebsite/Details.aspx?ShortName=Riverside_LA96EL

Telford – stayed at friends in Wellington

Premier inn
The Haymarket Bristol, Avon BS1 3LR
0870 238 3307 E-Mail: www.premierinn.com/en/why/contact_us.html

Meadowlea Guesthouse
65 Station Road Okehampton EX20 1EA
01837 53200 E-Mail: meadowleaguesthouse@tiscali.co.uk