

Sarah's JOGLE

When you first start to plan your JOGLE / LEJOG, it is easy to assume that everyone who does this is a well organised cycling obsessive, fully clued up on the latest kit, well experienced in the touring department and unhealthily obsessed with numbers. (Speed? Distance? Road?) But not everyone is. I decided to JOGLE on more or less a whim. I had toured a little so had ironed out some hitches but realistically, this was my first BIG cycling holiday. I wish I had been fitter, to start with, but then, thinking about the terrible weather I wonder if actually, no level of fitness would have made it easy. For most of the time I had a love/hate relationship with the whole adventure. But at the end of everyday, I felt fantastic. When I got to the end I was elated but at the same time, gutted. Absolutely gutted that the whole thing was over.

My diary below doesn't tell you much about route planning or equipment but does give you a good idea of the highs and lows of cycling the length and breadth of the country.

.oOo.

John O'Groats to Land's End : 8 - 27 July 2010



Aargh!

I think I'm more nervous about getting the train and making connections than actually cycling! Not much chance of sleep tonight. Packing is done; I have sorted out all the accommodation; photocopied all maps; charged phones and camera and synced the I Pod. Should be good to go?!

Almost...

I'm off! I'm at a hostel in Thurso at the moment (wouldn't recommend it) and about to set off on my pre-JOGLE t-jog. Not impressed by the weather, nice and cool but far, FAR too much wind for my liking. I'll be blown off Dunnet head at this rate

Dunnet Head

Beautiful! It was amazing to watch the weather cross the sea. Took lots of photos that probably won't do it justice!

Had lunch at Castle of Mey and arrived at the youth hostel by three. As they don't open till 5 I unloaded and went to the pub.

Lovely hostel where I met and chatted with other 'End-to-End' ers. One group just finishing offered advice, 'don't give up'. The other group just starting had laminated maps that put my photocopies to shame.

JOG - Helmsdale 56 Miles

The hardest day cycling I have ever EVER done. The rain began just as I got to John O'Groats and then didn't stop. I had a few stops, at Wick Tescos (such value for money cafes don't you think?) and at Lybster Harbour (where I brushed up on my barrel making knowledge and the lovely lady in the cafe tumble dried my now soaking jumper). As I climbed back out of the harbour I realised the wind had now joined the rain, and the wind direction was opposite to me.

I swear that the journey was up hill all the way and with that wind, my muscles were screaming.

It is important to remember, on long journeys like this that what goes down must inevitably come back up and so with much trepidation (because I could see across the valley) I navigated the mile or so 13% descent. The rain had stopped but the wind remained so I pushed my bike across the bridge and never really got on again until the top of the hill.

After a slightly less steep climb I passed a group of cyclists sunning themselves (see, not only me suffering) and at the top of the hill talked to their companion. He gave me the best news I have ever heard, Helmsdale is in the next valley so, over the brow of the hill and I should see it.

I pushed on and reached the summit and there, after a scary hairpin bend (where a car with a trailer chose to overtake me), I reached Helmsdale. I swooped down the hill singing at the top of my lungs! I even had to stop to take a photo of the sign, never has one road sign caused so much joy.

The hostel is to be recommended as apparently is the chippy although I went to the pub!

Helmsdale to Fortrose 63 Miles

Seems to be down hill from Helmsdale to Dornoch as no wind. No ferry running so had to do a 10 mile diversion via Cromarty Bridge. At the end of a 60 mile day a climb to Eagle mount was not welcome but reaching the top was joyous.

B and B was lovely, owners really friendly and couldn't do enough to help. Gut busting breakfast.

Fortrose - Aviemore 53 Miles

Honestly, why does the weather hate me? The wind started even before I'd left the black isle and continued for hours. I spent some time in Inverness (buying a book based on weight as much as content and a route 7 cycle map) when I left, going via Culloden, the wind had started in earnest and I did the slowest 10 miles ever, into the wind and up hill. Having said that, I am getting into my touring stride and despite the climb to Slochd Summit (1328ft) it was a good day.

Aviemore - Pitlochry 57 Miles

A far better day's cycling today; I followed the national cycle network and made my way from Aviemore to Pitlochry over Drumochter pass. The route took me to the highest point on the national cycle network at 457m. The sign as you approach the summit tells you:

Warning Drumochter Summit

Cycle track climbs to 457m

Weather conditions can deteriorate without warning and can be severe even in summer
no food or shelter for 30km

It added a sense of drama to the occasion.

I think the term 'cycle path' is pushing it when talking of the metre wide pile of gravel that greeted me over the summit. Travelling into the traffic, into the wind and into the rain on what is a slippery mound of grit is not good for the nerves. I would have got off and walked but that would have taken longer. The descent continued on gravelled paths and some tarmac sections, making me grateful I was travelling north to south as it would have made for some tough climbing.

Overall, a good day with some beautiful views, now, to plan the path to Stirling!

Pitlochry to Stirling 64 miles

A reasonable start after a stop off at the bike shop (Escape Route, Pitlochry: Very helpful) to get the gears aligned in the hope that the chain will stop falling off and I can change up as well as down. It would be nice to arrive somewhere rain and oil free.

I followed the cycle route for a while so avoided the main road. I went via Dunkeld to have a look around and have a bite to eat and then picked out a route skirting around Perth. I stopped again Auchterarder, had a chippy and went to the loo, to do which I had to buy a 30p ticket. After cycling through Gleneagles I saw a Red Kite and associated twitchers who explained the flight of the bird and the distinctive tail.

The ride to Dunblane and Bridge of Allan was fairly uneventful but a significant diversion meant that I didn't arrive in Stirling along the most salubrious streets. A nice enough youth hostel just near the old jail.

Stirling - Peebles 60 Miles of pain

Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. What a day.

I woke in Stirling to a text pointing out the terrible weather and after much discussion decided that Wattie (who was going to cycle with me for the day) should stay at home rather than subject himself to the wind and rain and my inevitable bad mood. I have to say that by now, I am heartily sick of the rain. Everything I have with me is soaking and it is rather taking the joy out of cycling. But, my mood is philosophical; there is nothing I can do about it so I might as well just peddle on.

I planned my route over another expensive excuse for a continental breakfast and was off by 10. I spent a considerable period of time hunting around the shopping centre to find the post office (upstairs in W H Smiths) and posted some gear and maps home. I also got myself some M & S whole food salad things and some juice. By the time I had done all of that it was past 12 meaning a rather late start.

Stirling and the surrounding areas are not the most cycle friendly roads in the country. I negotiated round about after round about, sometimes following the road and sometimes following the far less quick and not necessarily safer cycle paths. After battling on for an hour the rain had finally soaked through and my mood had not improved. By this time I was skirting round Falkirk. Imagine my relief when I saw a great big Asda sign on the far side of a roundabout. After a 10 minute traffic negotiation task I eventually made it to the building underneath the sign, only to find it was a distribution centre. A little later, my relief at seeing a Tesco was short lived; it will open next week. In the end, I had lunch in a bus shelter.

Not content with the range of weather I had so far experienced on my sopping wet and windswept JOGLE, the gods decided to throw another one my way. Nice, dense fog. Now, fog is a pain because you can't see. Not only that, you are more than aware that you can't be seen. Add to this the fact that I was climbing over some Pentland hill and that it seemed to be a main thoroughfare for HGVs and you may begin to understand my despair. And as by now I was tired and soaking and cold and just generally pissed off, I think I did reach despair. And I kept on passing signs for Edinburgh (Home).



After the world's slowest climb I eventually found my turn off and managed to drop down a little, out of the fog. I stopped to eat and phone Steve. And cry. By this point I had done 30 miles of a 60 mile day. I didn't want to give up and wasn't going to but, I had no idea how I was going to

make it to the end. It seemed to summarise my whole JOGLE so far. I have been cycling for 7 days, most days have been windy and not one of them hadn't involved rain. Everything I have read about cycle touring has said that it isn't the cycling that is the challenge, it's the psychology and right now, I fully understand what they mean.

Steve phoned the accommodation to let them know I would be late and I pushed on. At the bottom of the hill was a sign saying 24 miles to Peebles. I think if I had passed a vacancies sign there and then I would have taken it. 24 miles seems impossible, but what choice? At Blythe Bridge there was a 10 mile sign. A doable distance. A not far now distance. I stopped to eat and watch as 3 buzzards circled in the rain. As the thunder started and the deluge of rain cleared away the last of the fog, my mood began to lift.

By this point, I was on a bit of my map that had disintegrated in the rain so was blindly following the road. My usual habit of looking out for landmarks to pinpoint myself on the map was useless. I find it all rather disorientating and despite the milometer and road signs, have no idea how far I have to go.

Eventually I pass into the town, give myself a little cheer and again, have a little cry (this is an ongoing theme). I gently take out the sodden town centre map and navigate my way to the hotel. There, they cook me some tea even though the kitchen is closed. I have a bath and the heated towel rail dries my wettest clothes. I go to bed reflecting on what a horrible day it has been. I'm sick of the rain but can't stop grinning because I got myself here then surely, I can get myself to Land's End.

Peebles to Rochester 66 miles

I think the pain of yesterday has fortified me. The weather could be worse, the cycling could be harder, but I can do all of that now that I have conquered despair. I know today will be tough, I have contours on my map and can see what the climb through the Cheviots will be like but I don't care. I can do it and besides; tomorrow is a rest day!

I cycle out of Peebles after buying some food and a new water bottle (left mine on the side of the road in some pit of despair yesterday) and cycle on out of Peebles. The main road is busy and narrow so I soon turn off onto a minor road on the other side of the river. I have chosen several possible routes and decide in the end to go through Selkirk and Hawick following the A6088 to the border.

Lunch in Selkirk is forgettable and as the rain has reappeared I stop again in Hawick to eat and to get supplies. This is the last big town I pass until Hexham. Along with some packed lunch stuff I decide to get a bottle of wine and, as I will be carrying it for the next 30 odd miles, I make it a good one. Setting off out of Hawick I feel good and look forward to the rest of the day's ride. The wind picks up as the rain dies down but by now, I don't really care.

From Hawick I cycle up until I can see nothing but horizon. For ages it feels like I am cycling on top of the world, like it's this great big ball moving under my tires. I try to capture this on camera to no avail. Eventually the trees of Kielder forest begin to come into view and I am delighted to see them, the border and then the descent to Rochester can't be far.

After what seems like hours of cycling up and up and up, I have seen a deer, some cows and 2 cars since I left Hawick, I finally reach the border. The view is stunning; I stand and look around in awe, surprised to feel so elated although not at all surprised to be crying again. As I take photos another cyclist, a sporty one, passes me making comment that it is not often you see someone else up here (428 m), especially not on a loaded bike. I feel very proud of myself.



I put my hat on over my wet hair and enjoy a fast descent back into the forest and eventually, arrive at the b and b. I switch on the TV, have a bath and open that bottle of wine.

On my rest day I do little more. I knit a hat and snooze. I have more baths and update my diary. I organise my maps for the rest of the journey and watch as the wind and rain batter the window. For once, I can wash and dry my clothes. By the end of the day I feel thoroughly rested and ready for the next challenge.

Rochester to West Auck 63 Miles

Bloody Co. Durham. Never cycle there. Never.

I don't mind a long climb, a bit of a slog but after today, I hate little hills. Well, not that little (323m max) but up and down. I have come to hate a descent because that naturally means another ascent. I got lost for the first time around Consett and, also a first, I have had to rely on the compass for navigation. If I did find road signs at the 5 point cross roads they were to places not marked on my map. The gradients have been ridiculous and navigation a nightmare.

I felt good when I left Rochester, I decided to follow the Roman Road out and over towards Hexham and quickly fall out with their road building philosophy. I have never seen so many blind summits on one road.



Still, the up and downs are worth the effort. Not like Co. Durham.

I stop in Hexham and get some food. I mean to stop again in Consett but don't bother, to go into the town would mean a diversion and I am not sure it is worth the hassle. I stop instead to eat the last of my porridge bars after pushing my bike up some mighty gradient to get into the town.

I get lost in the lanes and begin to despair, I think of all the horror stories I have heard about Cornish hill and decide that most people don't cycle through the north east. They can't be as bad as this.

I come to wish I had stopped in Consett because after that it would have been a major diversion to find a cafe. After making my way through the evil little lanes (and I usually like a country road) passing one wedding and an apparent music festival, I pick up what I assume is the A68, signed in one direction but not mine, as if the way I am going is a foolhardy thing to do. Checking with the compass, just to be on the safe side, I take the road and am happy to be able to see where I am going and to see sensible, bigger hills. I stick to the quiet main road and arrive, rather late, at West Auck. I am delighted to see the town not only because it means no more silly hills but also because I am now officially past half way, on the home straight as it were.

The people who run the B & B are simply lovely. They show me to my room and make me a cuppa. We have a good chat and Kate (the owner) tells me she is a complimentary therapist. She kindly gives me a massage and I fall asleep relaxed.

West Auck to York 69 Miles

A far, far easier day today. I talked with Kate and her husband and had been delighted to hear that the way to York was mainly downhill and that it was simple navigation. I decided to go again on the dreaded Roman roads and then to take larger roads into York.

Obviously it rained and it was windy so it wasn't altogether an easy day but I made good time and felt in a more positive frame of mind. I think passing the half way point has made me feel

yeah; of course I can do this. Also knowing that Dad is joining me tomorrow and that the worst of the terrain (apart from the fabled Cornwall) is over also adds to my good mood. Until now I think I have been feeling like a bit of an interloper, a girl on a series of bike rides rather than an end-to-ender. This has been compounded by not seeing another JOGLE/LEJOG-er since Helmsdale. Today I feel a little more certain and a little more competent, like a proper tourist.

Apart from my change in mindset, it was an uneventful day. I had beans on toast (the most cycle friendly veggie food there is) at Scotch Corner and had tea in a deli in Thirsk. After that I followed the A19 into York. One long, straight, flat, badly surfaced road into York. After all my moaning about the hills in Durham, I am missing the occasional climb. I check into the youth hostel and seek out some tea. Tomorrow I will have a look around town and meet Dad at the station.

York to Redford 58 miles

Apparently, YHA breakfasts are a proper breakfast. I think SYHA should take note. There were eggs and beans and sausages and bacon and toast and tea and coffee and juice and cereal and fruit and yogurt. I left feeling quite full.

I took my time and had a look around York (buying some new trainers) before going to the station to meet dad. After a game of phone tic compounded by poor reception we found each other, loaded our bikes and set off. Meeting someone else (I have been on one ride with another person in the past 10 years) through me a little. I had forgotten to buy my usual flapjack and juice but had remembered the important things, a new pair of trainers.



Dad had picked out a route to Selby following the river and then on to Retford avoiding Doncaster and Scunthorpe. Dad had brought with him the good weather and for once, the sun was shining.

The path to Selby was pleasant but it was also our first encounter with the dreaded corn flies. I didn't take a picture at the time and have trawled the internet for something to indicate how horrible these pesky little buggers are. They are tiny black flies that stick to your skin, get in your

mouth, up your nose, down your top and crawl around on your glasses. They don't bite or sting, they simply sit there and irritate. By the time we got to Selby (not a lovely town) we were covered. Sunshine: good. Associated wildlife: bad.

There was no avoiding the flies so we carried on along the straight flat roads. It's amazing, having never spent much time in that part of the country I don't think I grasped quite how flat it was. And, it looks so English. All cornfields and hedgerows, the occasional grazing cow. Who knew?

However, in that part of the country people don't eat. This is the only conclusion I can draw. After Selby we had aimed to stop again for a sit down and a cuppa but, there was nowhere. No super markets, no pubs, not even a petrol station. We passed lots of funeral directors, an immigrant removal centre and several dog breeders but places to provide sustenance, no.

Eventually we found a Cost Cutters, apparently a destination most people drove to as it was the only shop for miles around and got ourselves something to eat. We spent most of the day on long straight flat roads and eventually arrived at our destination, Retford Travel Lodge. We put our bikes in the room and went out for tea.

Retford to Melton Mowbray 48 Miles

We checked out of the travel lodge and had breakfast at the nearby truck stop. After a dodgy start (wrong side of the road in the wrong direction!) we headed off towards Newark. Braving the flies we made it there in good time and had lunch at a very quaint looking cafe.



After that we carried on through the lanes, we managed to find one hill to Belvoir Castle where we stopped for a bite to eat before heading off again. There was one last just outside Melton where, when we reached the top (Dad first without stopping me slightly later after taking a more leisurely approach) a lady in a four-by-four stopped to ask how we had found the hill. She had recently taken up cycling and it seemed to be the bane of her new hobby. We pointed out that between living in the Lakes and Scotland hills weren't that much of a surprise but kindly agreed that yes it had been tough.



Finally arriving at Melton we found the hotel, got a takeaway and ended the day with a drink in a pub. We were most surprised to find a selection of Caledonian beers on tap and Ship Called Dignity playing on the stereo!

Melton Mowbray to Stratford-upon-Avon 68 miles

Today was a longer day and at last, there have been a few hills. We are beginning to see thatched cottages and little redbrick villages as we travel along. Sticking to our 'two stop' plan we had decided to stop on the outskirts of Leicester and in Rugby. With hind sight, we didn't choose towns that showed the best the area had to offer. Leicester was as expected but, had we waited a little longer the villages turned rather chocolate box with pretty little pubs. Rugby on the other hand, was terrible. It seems to be an intersection of lots of noisy, busy roads and the town centre was very dull-we tried to get food but apart from pubs everything was closing. Even the faithful old Asda cafe let us down so we bought some sandwiches and ate them in the car park.

After those stops, it was full steam ahead to Stratford. Dad had booked a meal for 8pm so there was no time to waste. After briefly getting lost in a teeny tiny village we managed to pick up The Fosse (another of those good old Roman roads) and cross the motor way. We made it to the youth hostel by 7.30, phoned the restaurant to push back our time to 8.30, washed, made our beds, booked a taxi and headed on out.

Tea was worth the rush and after a leisurely walk back we had a drink in the hostel bar.

The rest day was just what we needed. We had a look around the town and went on a boat cruise up the river. The guide had read one too many Horrible Histories for my liking but being on the boat was pleasant enough. Back to the youth hostel for a quick change, tea and then off to the theatre to see As You Like It. It was brilliant; we both had forgotten how good the theatre can be and left on a high.



As Corin butchered a rabbit during the interval it did make you think; was this a skill he had on his CV or one learnt for the part?

Stratford-upon-Avon to Bath 81 miles

I started the day saying goodbye to dad, as most people know, I am crap with goodbyes, and obviously had a little cry. I pulled myself together (after a fashion) and went down for breakfast. Knowing it was a long day, I went into Stratford to get some food before heading out of town and towards Cheltenham. I found it hard to get going today but once I found my legs, I was in a good mood. It tickled me to see that by going through Cheltenham I had managed to stick to a more hilly course, but I enjoyed the challenge and of course, the hills. I stopped in Cheltenham for lunch, nothing too interesting and then headed off to Stroud where I stopped to stock up on supplies. I reckoned by then that I only had 30 miles to go so didn't really push myself, imagining I would arrive in Bath by 8 at the latest.

I was cycling along quite nicely until I took the decision to turn off the main A46 and to take the back roads into the east of Bath. I did quite well until, well, I got lost. Not lost exactly but I knew I was on the wrong road and that although it would get me to where I wanted to go, it would take me an extra 5 miles. Knowing that, and also knowing that there were more little lanes than were marked on my map, I had to stick with it but that was only after a few diversions and one aborted attempt at turning back. After using the compass to ensure I was heading in vaguely the right direction, I hit the good old Foss and eventually a sign for Bath. It was getting late by this point and I stopped at a phone box to call the Youth Hostel only to find it had been vandalised, my own phone had been out of reception and then conveniently, out of power.

I eventually found the bridge into the city and turned to my very poor city centre map. I struggled up the hill through Bathampton and tried my best to orientate myself in Bath itself, not easy but having a vague idea of the direction I knew I was heading the right way. I eventually found the road the hostel was on and, true to YHA policy it was at the top of a hill, a 12% hill. I was knackered by this point and after a very poor effort, got off and pushed. This took, I suspect just as much energy as cycling would but at least was using slightly less weary muscles. Eventually I checked into the Youth Hostel, got changed and went down to the bar where I had a well deserved glass of wine.

Bath - Cannington 50 miles

A lovely relaxing day riding in good company. I reckon 50 miles is the perfect distance - far enough to feel you have got somewhere but not too far. Unfortunately, it would have taken me bloody ages if that was all I did each day.

I start the day feeling good. Rob and Dave are joining me so I wait for them in the hostel front garden, getting my bike ready for the ride. I used to share a flat with Rob and his girlfriend Sarah in Edinburgh and am looking forward to catching up. By perfect coincidence, Rob arrived just as I discovered the first puncture of my trip. I said hello and gallantly stepped aside to let him change the inner tube, I did make a half hearted attempt to pump it up but, in the end, let him do that too.

We set off up the rest of the bloody hill (no idea what it is really called) and headed out of the city. After a little foray into the back lanes of Somerset we tired of sudden steep evil climbs and made our way back to the main road. Rob navigated and I luxuriated in following along without having to worry about where we were. Rob and Dave had been warned in advance about my slow pace so Rob waited at the top of hills for me and Dave just cycled up and down them a few times (too much energy if you ask me). By the time we reached Wells for lunch I was beginning to catch up with Rob at least. We had a good meal in a pub that Dave knew that had something to do with Hot Fuzz before setting off for a look around.



The rest of the journey was fairly even free. There was far too much photo taking for my liking, especially photos of me grimacing at the top of some torturous hill. We stopped every now and then to look at the view or to check the route and by the time we made it Bridgewater Dave had decided that a 50 mile ride just wasn't enough and so, set off to Bristol armed only with the knowledge that it was that way ->

Rob and I cycled the last 5 miles to Cannington, I checked in and then we had a drink in the bar catching up on each other's news and watching a rather inept barman try his best to change a light bulb. He left to catch a train home and I had a pleasant enough meal whilst reflecting on the final part of my journey - I can't believe there are only 2 days left!

Cannington - Oakhampton 68 miles



I love Devon! The sun is shining, the birds are singing, haystacks adorn the fields and thatched cottages abound. I even stopped off to watch a cricket match on a village green. I started to get nostalgic for a ride that I haven't even finished - knowing it'll be back to real life soon.

The ride itself is peaceful and serene. Once I am out of the towns I trundle along through the countryside getting a little lost here and there but marvelling at how much easier things are after a good day yesterday and with the addition of some sunshine.

I arrive at my final youth hostel in the early evening and, true to form have to tackle a massive hill to get there. In a testament to the kind of day I have had, I cycle up it at a gentle pace and arrive none the worse for wear.

As I sit outside eating my tea the rain begins to fall and two fully sports clad cyclists arrive complaining loudly to each other about their day. It seemed they had got a puncture but, having no idea what to do about it had approached a car mechanic in the hope of help. They seemed most miffed that the mechanic had been at a loss and that the youth hostel had no restaurant. Ah, I thought to myself, the inexperienced tourists!

Oakhampton to Newquay 66 miles

What can I say? Second to last day, can't believe it.

I loved the ride over Bodmin and the mad sheep. I wasn't surprised when the fog came down but was rather disappointed when it didn't lift. I think it helped with the hills though, you can't worry about a climb that you can't see and the couple of times I managed to see the gradient I was impressed by my fitness. Who knew?



By the time I got to Newquay I had imagined that I would be drenched in sunlight, tanned and relaxed, a quick hop to Land's End on the last day. Maybe even a dip in the sea. Obviously the weather didn't agree and there was very little sea to see.

Newquay to Land's End 46 Miles



(Land's End. That's the sea out there.)

Mad! It's been an emotional day and utterly indescribable.

The fog never lifted and I never saw any of the beautiful sights of Cornwall but I did make it to Land's End. Not that I knew I was anywhere near it until I passed a private land sign on my side of the road, it was so foggy I didn't see the great big sign on the other side of the road.

When I got to the cliffs I couldn't even see the sea. The fog added to the otherworldly bemused feeling of being in a bubble. I can't believe it's over.

As I arrived at the complex 'Help the Aged' shuffled onto my i pod. I took my photos and had a pint before going down to the viewpoint, sitting on the bench and staring out to sea. The fog had lifted and finally I could see the stacks jutting out of the ocean. I put 'To the End' on the stereo and had a moment before setting off back to Penzance and my hotel.

Mad. Totally mad.

Record sheet

Just to prove I did it, and to demonstrate how totally soaking everything I owned got through three weeks of rain, here is my record sheet:



And then...

I am still cycling although I haven't done any major riding since the summer. I cycle to work most days and have only missed 2 weeks since the beginning of term, one week because my bike was being serviced and one because quite frankly, I wanted a break.

One thing to be said for a summer of soaking cycling is that the weather holds no fear for me. Wind? Rain? Bring it on (although the cold does add that something extra to tackle).

Next summer I plan to head off to France for a more relaxing and gentle tour. You know, stopping where I want, no plan, that kind of thing. I might even camp if the weather seems kinder.

Any advice on great places to go, gratefully received!

Notes

Wildlife: Red Squirrel, Slow worm, Red Kite, Buzzard, Eagle

Bike Shed Key rings: fish slice, wooden coathanger, teddy, wooden block, big wooden block, toilet seat

Weather: wind, fog, rain, thunder, lightening, drizzle, mist, cloud, a little bit of sun

My songs: Help the Aged, To the End

Hints and tips: set targets, take a compass, learn to read a map, eat, do it.

Best moments:

Reaching Helmsdale; Talking to twitchers; Reaching Blythe Bridge, standing in the trees in a thunderstorm eating tea, watching buzzards and knowing I would finish the day; Not minding the hills in Cornwall; Not getting too lost; The lady in Lybster drying my clothes and giving me coffee; The man in Tain phoning his father-in-law to check on the ferry; Crossing the border on top of the world; Feeling like I can do another 20 miles, and not having to; Help the aged playing as I reached Land's End; Sitting, looking out to see 'To the End' playing, all alone, crying, amazed.

Me: I sent a hand drawn postcard home every day. My bike is called Nordie. My mascot is a polar bear called Norris. I cried a lot. It's the strangest thing I have ever done. I loved every moment.