

5 Countries 5 Days

Day 1

Blantyre to Dundalk

Approx 120 miles

I began my journey at 06.30 am, head down, eyes down and butt up in the air to catch the ferry from Troon to Larne. It was raining and it was freezing cold, but I just grinned and bared it.

The journey to Troon was uneventful, though I got soaked every time a lorry passed my and I'm sure I saw the drivers laughing as they passed. I reached the ferry port by the skin of my teeth, I mis-calculated the timings. The crossing was rather choppy and it didn't look promising as I sat and looked out to sea. As I arrived in Larne I was greeted with wind and rain, which lasted for the rest of my journey. Having navigated the ferry traffic I was soon on the road and heading for Dundalk looking forward to a nice hot shower.

Day 2

Dundalk to Rhyl

Approx 105 miles

After breakfast and a quick bike check I was on the road and heading for Dublin to catch the ferry to Holyhead, Wales. The roads were a lot better in Southern Ireland and a pleasure to cycle on, which aided me to make quick progress and I arrived in Dublin with time to spare. First port of call was a pub for lunch and a pint of Guinness. Once on the ferry I got chatting to a couple from Sweden who were travelling through Europe before heading to South America and sunnier climates, how I envied them.

After arriving in Holyhead I had a 40 mile cycle to Rhyl along the coast with a head wind all the way, ah the joys of cycling. I reach Rhyl by 19.30 hrs only to find a note to say the landlord had popped out and wouldn't return until 20.00 hrs. I looked for some shelter and found it in the local chip shop where I had my evening meal.

Day 3

Rhyl to Lancaster

Approx 100 miles

I woke up nice and refreshed and decided to have an early start. The roads were quiet and I was soon leaving Wales and entering England, my plan for today was to reach Preston. Same again I was cycling into a head wind though it wasn't as strong as yesterdays. The miles just seemed to fly by and I

had a decision to make, will I push onto Lancaster, after much debating with myself, I decided to go for it. The weather cleared up briefly after I had made the decision, which helped to make the extra miles a little easier. I arrived in Lancaster around 19.00 hrs, after finding accommodation for the night, I had a nice hot shower and headed out to find an eating place. I entered a bar which was showing football on the Television, it had been World Cup qualify games that day. The bar was full and as I walked up to the bar, I heard a conversation about scotsmen, kilts and sheep, so I ordered my meal in my best Australian accent.

Day 4

Lancaster to Ecclefechan

Approx 90 miles

Today was the hardest day on the bike; I had to travel through the Lake District and over Shap Summit, a journey I wasn't looking forward to. The wind eased for most of the day, though I still had the rain as a friend. My intention for today was to stop off for lunch at the Jubilee Centre in Penrith, but once I was over Shap Summit I decided to stop and have lunch there. I was beginning to feel the effects of yesterday's hard cycle. Lunch consisted of a mars bars and a fruitcake, not much to recharge my batteries but it got me going again. I cycled through Penrith, Carlisle and stopped for a coffee at Gretna, wrong decision. Once I was off the bike I didn't want to go back on it but I knew I had to, as I had booked my accommodation in Ecclefechan and it was only 10 miles away. After leaving Gretna, a mile or so down the road I hit a brick wall (ouch) not literally, I couldn't go any further, my head was spinning, I thought I was going to collapse and my legs felt like jelly, I began to panic, as I had never felt this way before. After my head stopped spinning I began to feel better, I ate my emergency rations and sat for a ½ hr before setting off. I reached Ecclefechan hungry, tired and sore. I decided to go to the bar and have a pint of Guinness four pints later I was in my bed.

Day 5

Ecclefechan to Blantyre

Approx 80 miles

Uneventful day, though weather was beginning to clear up, 4 days to late. Stopped off at Abington for lunch, were I met another cyclist who was doing Lands End to John O'Groats, we chatted at length about the trials and tribulations of cycling the length of Britain. I set off with a spring with the fond memories of my epic journey of last year and with a sense of achievement from this years challenge. I arrived home around tea time, pleased to see my family and headed off to bed for a long deserved rest.

I would like to thank John Cairns and my sponsors, the Scottish Chamber of Safety, Safety Groups UK and the Safety Health and Environmental Forum.
(Scotland)