

Bowness to Tynemouth 26th & 27th May 2008

Ride report by John Cooper (aged 9) assisted by Dad

Well this wasn't quite the 9th birthday present that I'd been expecting. Dad and I had decided some months ago to tackle the Hadrian's Wall Cycle HCW 100 after I'd learnt about the Romans at school and drinking far too much fizzy pop.

We were initially thinking of doing the ride over Easter but after reading one of your reports were glad that we didn't. Anyway, Mum, Dad, sister Kirsty and I drove up to Carlisle on Sunday morning from our home in Henley-on-Thames so that Dad and I could start the ride early Monday morning.

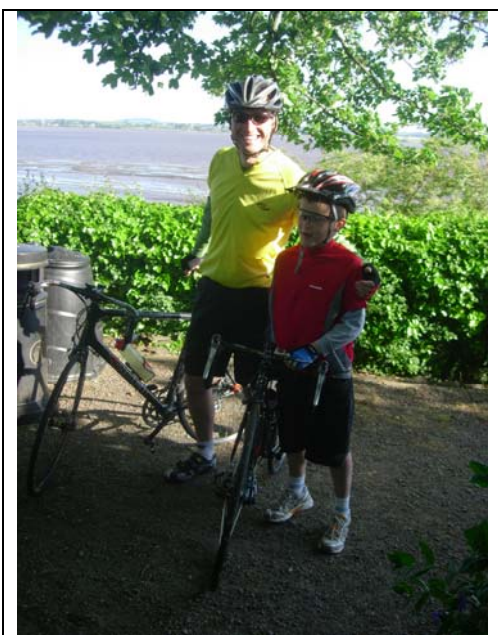
After checking into our Hotel we drove to the start point and then followed the route to Brampton so Dad could familiarize himself. The idea was that Mum & Kirsty would meet us at various points along the way so that we could top up on food and drinks. Dad had checked the weather and hinted that it might be a little windy for the first few miles. *(and they tell us kids not to fib).*

By 9.00pm on Sunday night, dad and I with bikes where safely tucked up in bed with Mum & teenage sister Kirsty in the adjoining room.

Day One

Dad and I got up at 6.30am so that we could load everything in the car and be ready for 7.00am breakfast. As it was a bank holiday breakfast didn't start until 8.00am. *(thanks dad).* Anyway dad decided that it would be fine to go into the breakfast area and help ourselves to cereals etc, *(what happened to 'always ask, don't just help yourself).*

We left the hotel at 7.30am with only half our support team, sister Kirsty had decided like most teenagers on holiday that the day starts after lunch not before. By 8.00am we were ready to go although we didn't leave until 8.15am as Mum wanted to check that dad knew what would happen to him if any harm came to me. *(she can be pretty scary).* One last toilet stop *(I told you to go before we left dad)* and we were off.



Within a few miles it was obvious that that little wind statement was a complete fib as we peddled into a very, very strong headwind.

The ride to Carlisle was tough as the wind just didn't seem to give up but dad was confident that it would change (*another fib*). On our way through the City we met this really nice old boy (he must have been at least 70) who had lost his bearing and was looking for the A7. Dad asked him where he was heading and he said he was off to see John O'Groats, I not sure who this John bloke is but dad seemed shocked and muttered away to himself for the next few miles. Once past Carlisle it was into the countryside towards Brampton our first meeting point.

At Brampton, we met mum and Kirsty and replenished our energy drinks before tackling the roads or should I say hills ahead. Luckily dad and I had practiced a few hills so the climb to bank wasn't too bad although the old man suffered a bit. Mum & Kirsty had waited in the parking area by the turret so I chatted to them whilst dad caught up (*tee he*).

From here we headed for Haltwhistle where we were due to meet mum & Kirsty for lunch. I had began to realize that the wind was not going to get any better so decided to tuck in close behind dad to get as much protection as possible. Along the road to Haltwhistle we met another cyclist who had completed the East to West ride and was on the return leg, he confirmed that the wind wasn't going to improve. We finally reached the Tearooms in Haltwhistle at around 12.45pm, 4hr 30 mins into the day.

Jacket potatoe, cheese and beans followed by plenty of drinks and we were ready for the afternoon. We wanted to try and beat the hills and get to Hexham before the end of the afternoon. The lucky thing about being a kid is that you don't really understand how difficult things like the conditions are until it's too late, unlike dad who knew what was in store for us in the afternoon.

Around Smiths Shield Dad and I stopped for a well deserved rest. The weather was sunny but it was still very windy and the scenery was really pretty, we sat on a bench by the side of the road eating bananas and chocolate, life was good. 45 minutes later life wasn't so good as we battled to reach the summit of the ride. The wind was strong and gusting, both dad and I had given up trying to peddle and opted to push the final few hundred metres to the top. We cycled on towards Corbridge and completed our first days cycle between Fourstones and Cortbridge at around 5.00pm.

Dad had organized accommodation just outside Hexham so we loaded the bikes and headed to the hotel for a hot bath and plenty of food.

Day Two

Up at 6.30am, breakfast at 7.00am and ready to ride by 8.00am. I had a really good nights sleep so was ready for the day ahead. Mum without teenage sister again dropped us at our starting point and agreed to meet us in Newburn in around two hours. The wind had dropped slightly and once the final climb was out of the way the ride got much much easier. We pushed on, for the first time dad and I managed to cycle alongside each other and chat, such fun after the previous day. We met Mum and Kirsty at Newcastle Rowing Club and topped up our drinks and headed for Newcastle. We agreed to meet up with them at the Millenium Bridge. Dad had decided to book our last nights accommodation at the Malmaison in Newcastle to make it up to Mum & Kirsty who had endured two days of boredom. When we arrived we couldn't find them so dad phoned only to find out that they had already checked into the hotel. We agreed to push on to Tynemouth and meet them there, only 11 more miles.



Although the riding was much easier today the last 10 miles seemed to go on and on. We rode along path after path past scrap yards and well scary places. Dad reckoned those guys who finished their ride in the dark must have been tough, mad or foreign.

We, or should I say I completed the ride just before 1 o'clock with dad a couple of hundred metres behind.



We loaded the bikes and headed for the Hotel. The Hotel was great and we kept our bikes in reception until the next morning (cool). The food was fantastic and Mum & Kirsty enjoyed the afternoons shopping.

So now that I have finished my journey what have I learnt and am I any the wiser?

Well yes I have learnt that

- Grown ups fib big time
- Being a kid is cool, when you ask *'how far to go'* and you are told *'just around the corner'* you believe them.
- Life doesn't get easier as you get older, you should have seen dads face on the climb from Vindlanda Fort.
- Always go to the toilet before you leave - dad
- The harder you try the better you get

Cool ride, great scenery, fantastic route markings and nice people.

Would I do it again, too right