

CYCLING FROM HEBDEN BRIDGE TO LONDON

Short version.

357km

2270m of ascent

13hours of ride time.....2hours50 minutes of stops.

27kph average.

The oh gosh what a long version....

As you may know I live oop north and my partner lived in north london. Now in the world of Emma its logical to assume that one day I'd ride down. Time is ticking as Ali is moving up in a couple of weeks.

Enter my friend the crazy boxer....Paz. Top half is a heavy weight boxer, covered in tattoos and the bottom half shaves his legs and powers up hills on his bike. We met when I tried to chase him up the longest incline in England a few years ago. We've done a few silly long jaunts since then.

Paz pointed out it was about time to do another and so the idea was born.

Throw open an invite to tri London and along comes Avi (although I'm wondering if he's really magnus backsted in a wig the way he just keeps on pedalling) and his life saving GPS.

After a spot of faffing about 5am arrives and off we pedal, collecting Paz along the way. I could go into the ride but I think I'll stick more with my observations.

Avoiding the bigger hills we arrived into Sheffield. A big eye opener for me. I never knew it had trams. More noticeable was the poverty, huge long strips of derilict tower blocks, the graffitti in six foot high letters "you couldn't make it up!" Says it all really. I ran the Rotherham 50 a couple of years ago and left that thinking how sad the forgotten north is. Once areas of such industrial promise blown apart by the last recession only to claw themselves back only to get trampled yet again. But enough social comment the band of weary travellers were getting hungry.

Now let's just say we didn't exactly find a jem of locally produced organic healthy baked breakfast goodies....more two confused voluntary ladies staffing a charity community space. "Now breakfast is beans, bacon, eggs and two slices of bread". "Can we have toast?" "That's extra if you want it toasted. It'll be £2 not £1.80" brilliant you couldn't script it and they only do scrambled egg as the whole lot was microwaved!

Off we pedal down towards Newark on Trent. Rolling plains expand before us. Paz hadn't done much cycling in

the last year (not more than 50km) and was starting to get some shoulder pain. Hard nut boxers don't do ibruprofen and he soldiered on with 'mental strength' as he described it!

Looking out at the lush green landscape I pondered as to how many flag waving chavs really ever look at the country as we do. Such a varied land, passing castles forests, houses by many a design, windmills.....hungry again.....garden centre at Rutland. GPS wasn't programmed to negotiate poly tunnels! Just as we'd settled in with the blue rinse brigade it started to rain. And rain it did. Avi had packed the kitchen sink so was fine but Paz had to nip off to purchase a lovely anorak turning him into half chav half cyclist! Another round of tea and cake and we had to admit we were about to get soaked. Still we were 200km in so we'd cracked the back of it.

Rain rain rain.

Thank god for gps as hovering with maps would have been horrid. Strangely my memory seems to have erased the soggy bit and can only remember the joys of Wellingborough. Avi turned into a man with a one track mind....and the mind said....(You guessed it)....food! Hot food...mmmmm...not sure what Wellingborough was doing for tourism but I think we missed it!

And on we pedal.....and pedal....amazingly I didn't feel tOo bad. Taking turns on the front I think we made a good team. The rain had stopped and I think we were all lifted by realising we could do it. Somehow we then seemed to slow. I'd forgotten the list of place names to follow and couldn't remember where welwyn was.....but then like a mirage a sign with A1000 upon it. Never thought that would be such a happy sight! 30km to go...last chance for a quick hide behind the hedge wee and we're on the home stretch.

And the football was on! I became a football fan....well not of actual football more the fact that the roads were ours. I'd been worried about london traffic when I was tires but it was fine.

Quick charge round the north circular and there was Ali nearly in tears ready to greet us with.....yep.....a big pile of yummy food!

Brilliant fun. Ace people to ride with. Great route.....can't wait for the next adventure.

Emma