



The route followed the coast closely



An indicator of a 'Dutch hill'

That 1950s' fortnight

HUGH FOULSTONE RECALLS A TOUR OF THE SOUTH WEST FROM OVER 60 YEARS AGO

My wife Mary recently found her old National Cyclists' Union diary from 1955, which brought back memories of a fortnight's tour we enjoyed that year with two friends from Wombwell Wheelers, Brian Gould and Neil Murgatroid.

We used a route from the 1939 News Chronicle 'Cycling and Open Road Annual' as a guide, booking our overnight stops in advance, mostly at youth hostels. We all switched from fixed-wheels to gears for the tour.

After leaving Bristol, we were soon in the Somerset countryside and the Mendip Hills, riding through the spectacular Cheddar Gorge and staying at the Youth Hostel there. Our evening duty for the four of us was sitting on the lawn to peel a heap of potatoes for the following day.

We followed the coast as closely as we could as we progressed anti-clockwise around the Cornish peninsula. Highlights included: Tintagel Castle, with its associations with King Arthur; attempting to surf at Newquay; receiving chocolate tea cakes when we asked for tea cakes for sandwiches ('Oh, you mean bread cakes'); the spectacular views from the cliffs at Land's End; sunshine on St Michael's Mount; and the contours of the Jurassic Coast in Dorset.



Cheddar Gorge in 1955

GUIDED RIDING

David Healey and wife **Sian** toured Holland with other sighted and visually-impaired tandemists

My wife Sian and I have been riding tandems for over ten years, mostly up and down the Taff Trail, near our home in Cardiff.

Sian is visually impaired, so a tandem allows the whole family to go for bike rides together. However, I had always wanted to go further. Last October, we went on a tandem tour of Holland with Traveleyes, a holiday company for blind and sighted travellers.

Eighteen of us met at Schipol, seven visually impaired (VI) and 11 sighted. We then transferred to our accommodation for the trip: a passenger barge. Once we were riding, the barge would sail to that day's destination, taking our belongings with it.

We covered 40-55km each day,



Each day's destination

riding at an easy pace and stopping every two hours or so for a visit to a museum, café, shop, or other tourist attraction. Our guide Marcel also led an evening walking tour of each town we stayed at. There was usually a tactile or scented element to the tour, as well as time for the sighted guides to describe the scene to their VI partners. In Amsterdam's red light district, one of the VI tourists asked his guide to describe what the girl in the window was wearing. Quick as a flash, she said: 'Well, in my opinion, far too much make-up and not enough clothes.'

We rode on designated cycle paths through cities, farmland, sand dunes, and woodland, and along canals and rivers. Everybody thinks that cycling in the Netherlands is easy. We discovered that what Holland lacks in altitude, it makes up for with wind.

Apart from the cycling, the other element to this holiday was to act as a sighted guide for the VI travellers. We worked with somebody different each day, and it was humbling to meet people with such determination. They never treated anything as too difficult, and their 'can do' attitude was inspirational.

The barge was both sag-wagon and accommodation



Old-school off-road riding on Dartmoor

Devon Dirt photos: Graham Brodie

THE DEVON DIRT

Julia Browne headed into the Dartmoor hills with big tyres and modest ambitions

The previous year's Devon Dirt had been fun but hard work: 30 miles on my partner's fat bike, trying to stay with a group who were faster and fitter... and not on fat bikes. As the 2017 version was a figure-of-eight loop, I checked whether it would be cheating to ride just the first loop and stop. Organiser Graham Brodie was agreeable, and so first-timer Meg Hepworth and I put in our entries quick.

This time I had my own fat bike, so Meg borrowed my partner's. At least neither of us would have a bike advantage over the other! For me, the biggest appeal of the Devon Dirt is that it's 'proper' riding. The focus is on stitching together bridleways, green lanes, rough woodland tracks, and moorland trails with short tarmac



Julia (r) & friend Shani

stretches, lots of climbing, and great scenery. Dartmoor isn't short on scenery, and on a sunny spring day, trekking on a bike is an excellent way to appreciate it.

The fat bikes were fine. It was a bit more work getting them uphill on roads, but they were so sure-footed, stable, and forgiving on the rough stuff. If you have the gearing and the legs, they'll climb anything.

We made the right call to ride only the first, 17-mile loop, however. We'd already climbed just over 2,000ft and were dead last coming in to the lunch stop – only partly because we kept stopping to take photos. The Dirt is emphatically not a race, fortunately! Every year, I wear the T-shirt and aching legs with pride.

The 2018 Devon Dirt is on 8 April and is part of the Cycling UK Challenge Ride Series. See devondirt.co.uk.



Some Canadian rivers become winter trails

Riding on ice

KEN PRESTON TOOK A SPIN ALONG A COUPLE OF FROZEN RIVERS IN CANADA

Yesterday was a beautiful winter day in Winnipeg: -7°C , with little wind. So I went for a ride.

For several years now, our city has been building winter skating and walking trails on the two major rivers that pass through the city, the Red and the Assinaboine. These trails start at Forks, where the two rivers meet. Every year, the trails vary in length depending on the temperature and the water levels at the time of freezing. This winter, we had a very cold December and early January, which with low water levels on the Assinaboine have made for some lovely trails.

Cycling on these icy trails is wonderful. You get a view of the city that one does not normally get. You see people skating, walking, running, and of course cycling. Many of the cyclists use fat bikes, but if you stick to the skating trails it's not really necessary. I use a converted singlespeed, a Trek mountain bike with two-inch studded tyres.

The trail down both rivers is about 6km. This year, the Forks staff hope to have the length close to 9km once it's finished. The trails are adorned with spruce trees and warming huts. The huts change from year to year, the designs chosen by an international competition.

Yesterday they were building a pop-up restaurant on the frozen river, so there will be an even wider choice of post-ride food and drink than usual.



Warming huts dot the frozen route

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