



Details

- **Where:** Teesside and North Yorks
- **Start/finish:** Saltburn-by-the-Sea (nr Redcar)
- **Distance:** 100mi
- **Pictures:** Dan Joyce and Keith Duncan





DAN JOYCE

Cycle Editor

In any group of riders, Dan is usually on the widest, most comfortable tyres. His bones aren't that old, just broken.

Great Rides

STILL GOT IT

Cycling UK's Triennial Veterans' Rides challenge cyclists aged 50 and over to complete 100 miles or 100km. **Dan Joyce** joined Teesside CTC's event

Perhaps it's the age: I can't remember when I last rode 100 miles in a day. My Sunday morning club rides seldom exceed 70.

But today's loop through Teesside and North Yorkshire doesn't look hard on paper: an average speed of 10mph will hit the time limit.

Having turned 50 this year, I'm one of the youngest riders. The oldest is Teesside CTC's Michael Grainger, aged 79. "I've never ridden 100 miles in my life," he says. "And it'll be 110 when I get home as I've cycled to Saltburn from Redcar." Yet he seems relaxed at the prospect too. "I've done 80-mile club rides. I've just never had a particular reason to ride 100 miles."

Today isn't a race, a fact emphasised at the pre-ride briefing. It's not a sportive either, which some participants treat as races. Like all Triennial Veterans' events, which take place as the name says every three years, it's a reliability ride: a steady-paced social spin with a time limit. For many Tri-Vets Rides, that's 12 hours. For us, it's 10.

THE VETERANS

Sixty-eight cyclists congregate in Saltburn-by-the-Sea, 46 signing on for the 100-mile ride and 22 for the 100km option. The unifying factor is, of course, age; there's much grey hair hidden by cycle helmets. And most of us are from the North East or Yorkshire. Otherwise we're a diverse bunch, on bikes ranging from carbon racers through training and audax bikes to tourers.

Teesside CTC's David Easby, who plotted the 100-mile route, looks like your typical lifelong club cyclist: lean frame, legs like chiselled mahogany. By contrast, Mike O'Malley, riding the 100km route, began cycling with Teesside CTC just three years ago. "I was diagnosed

Do it yourself Teesside CTC Tri-Vets

- The Triennial Veterans' Rides next take place in 2022. However, you can follow this route by yourself: download the GPX file from cyclinguk.org/article/tri-vets-2019. Saltburn-by-the-Sea is accessible by train – change at Darlington. By road, head for Guisborough, then it's only a handful miles on to Saltburn. If you're cycling to Saltburn, avoid the A171 at all costs: traffic is fast and sight lines are often poor.

with diabetes," he says, "and decided I had to do something."

This being their home event, Teesside CTC are well represented. So are the Durham Redstarts, a ladies club that began as a Breeze group. Some of today's starters have Tri-Vets badges and date bars to prove they've done one or more of these century rides before. Tracey Hodgson (Teesside CTC) doesn't; she's younger than me. But she's done 100 mile rides: "Mostly up to Bishop Auckland. It's quite flat that way along the Tees Valley."

'GRAVEL' RIDING

Departure is a relaxed affair. We set off in groups of a dozen or so, some heading along an A-road, others – including my group – taking a shortcut via a shared-use path. "Watch out for dog-walkers and their long leads," cautions Teesside CTC's Andy Edwards. "They don't like cyclists." Andy is the recovery driver for the day, "but I'm not expecting to be needed."

Soon we're on the seafront. Wind turbines in three straight rows – the Teesside Wind Farm – rotate in the cool morning breeze. There's no smoke to mark the wind direction from Redcar's nearby steelworks; the blast furnace and coke ovens were extinguished four years ago.

We leave Redcar on A-roads, turning off when we get to Wilton Bank. This wooded lane is the day's toughest climb, a 20% gradient at its steepest. A sign at the top says 'Cyclists dismount', but by then we've ridden up it.

The sun starts to break through as we roll through Guisborough. Arm warmers, jackets, and gilets are shed at the first feed stop at Battersby.

The Cleveland Hills loom on our left as



79-year-old Mike Grainger rode the 100-mile route



Main: The rides began and ended in view of the North Sea
Below: Lunch at Hutton Ruddy

GPS navigation
Not yet taken the leap? Read: [cyclinguk.org/article/guide-gps-and-route-plotting-cyclists](https://www.cyclinguk.org/article/guide-gps-and-route-plotting-cyclists)

▶ we continue. The roads are quiet and pleasant but there's one problem: surface dressing. Jim Benbow from Redcar, riding alongside me, is scathing. "It's everywhere," he says. "They covered roads that didn't need it."

COASTING HOME

There's plenty of food for us all at Hutton Ruddy village hall. I eat in the sunshine, chatting to Mike Grainger again, mostly about electric bikes. He recently bought one for his wife, then did a few longer rides on it himself to put some miles on it before its first service. "There's a steep hill near here, a bit like Milton Bank," he says. "I can ride up it but it's quite tough. On the e-bike, I went up one-handed, waving at people."

Andy Edwards is at the lunch stop too. He has had to rescue one rider who'd broken a spoke: "He only had 16 in his wheel so his ride was over."

After lunch, the two routes split. The 100km riders head back to Saltburn. Those of us doing 100 miles carry on, crossing the A19 and winding our way towards Northallerton. Not until we reach the hamlet of Ellerton, just across the River Swale from Catterick, do we turn back towards the coast.

In doing so we turn into the wind. With fatigue setting in, some riders start to drift off the back of our group. I circle back to offer a tow. It works with one rider, fails with another couple.

"I don't like riding right behind someone," I'm told. "I'm worried you'll brake suddenly."

"I won't," I reply. But the elastic snaps. So

it's a pleasant surprise to come together again at the final feed stop at Danby Wiske. The dropped riders have accidentally taken a slightly wrong turning and beaten us there!

As we get nearer to the North Sea, we pass a couple of blokes with numbers on their bikes.

"What event are you doing?" I ask.

"Coast to coast."

"Is this your last day?"

"First. We're doing it in a day. We set off at six o'clock this morning."

Their ride is 150 miles, fifty more than ours. Like them, we're in the final stretch. Up there is the distinctive crag of Roseberry Topping. Then pretty soon after we're descending towards the sea at Saltburn, where our certificates await.

Keith Duncan is there, although I don't initially recognise him in civvies. He was dressed for the 100km route when I saw him last. There's been one minor spill: a rider cycling close behind another hit a cyclepath bollard when the other swerved around it. Otherwise it's been a great day: everyone but two finished, and all of those within the time limit. See you again in 2022? ●

Fact file
Teesside CTC Tri-Vets

- **Distance:** 100 miles (although I logged 97...) or 100km.
- **Route:** Up the coast to Redcar then looping inland, skirting the northern edge of the North York Moors.
- **Conditions:** Mostly quiet lanes through easy terrain; some A-road sections. Breezy, sunny, and dry.
- **Bike used:** Genesis Vagabond with 700x44C Rene Herse Snoqualmie Pass tyres.

● **Maps/guides:** Cue sheets and GPX files provided. I converted the latter to TCX to work on an old Garmin Edge 500.

● **I'm glad I had...** A vegan lunch option (thanks, Teesside CTC). Tyres that floated over that surface dressing.

● **Next time I would...** Ride further ahead to allow more time to set up photos. Use a GPS computer with better navigation.

● **Further info:** [cyclinguk.org/local-groups/teesside](https://www.cyclinguk.org/local-groups/teesside).

● **Thanks:** Keith Duncan would like to thank the amazing volunteers: Andy Edwards, David Easby, Mark Greenshields, Brian Turnbull, Caroline Edwards, Karen Easby, and Janet Duncan.

i Buy a badge
Until 16 August, badges and date bars are on sale for all finishers:
shop.cyclinguk.org/trivets-date-bars-and-badges

