



East Midlands

Going the distance

Bob Tinley joined 48 other veteran cyclists for a century ride through the East Midlands

Forty-nine riders, with ages ranging from 51 to 79, gathered at Binley Woods Village Hall for CTC Coventry's 100-mile Triennial Veterans' ride. After a quick coffee, we were sent off in groups of 10.

Regular riders on our Tri-Vet events were unsurprised to find themselves on a track to Coombe Abbey. But it wasn't long before we were back on tarmac and making good progress to Sibbertoft, a Northamptonshire village at the top of the biggest climb of the route. Our efficient team of caterers had already set up in the village hall to welcome us.

We were soon on our way again, heading into the narrow lanes of Rutland, which became noticeably more undulating. There was a delightful gated road from Blaston to Horninghold, then a leg alongside Eyebrook Reservoir to Great Easton for lunch. The ladies of the local WI provided us with an excellent lunch.

After that, we headed south-west to Arthingworth and Naseby along a lovely narrow lane; it was hard to believe it was only yards from the A14 dual carriageway. We stopped briefly by Thomas Fairfax's view at Naseby, but there didn't seem to be a

lot of enthusiasm for Civil War history!

We had a few rain showers before we arrived at West Haddon. On leaving it, we were treated to one of the cycling gems of Northamptonshire: a succession of narrow gated roads through Winwick to Yelvertoft. Nearly home, we crossed the River Avon to Catthorpe and followed another singletrack road to Bretford.

In three years we'll be doing it again, but you don't have to wait that long: CTC Coventry will be 100 years old in 2021 and there will be a 100-mile ride to celebrate. You won't have to be over 50 to take part either.



Top: Eyebrook Reservoir
Bottom: Quiet lanes

Scotland

Costa del Scotland

Sunny skies followed **Gisela Blee** on her Highlands and Islands tour

PERFECT CYCLING WEATHER in northern Scotland? Not a phrase you often hear, but it was true last May. Tour leader Martin Jamieson had stitched together a 350-mile route through Sutherland, Caithness, and Orkney. Unsurprisingly, it was hilly. Surprisingly, it was sunny. We arrived in Inverness in the rain and cold, but then the skies cleared.

Day one involved cycling to Ullapool via the unexpectedly quiet A835. By day two, as we headed to Lochinever, the A835 had dwindled to a singletrack road with passing places.

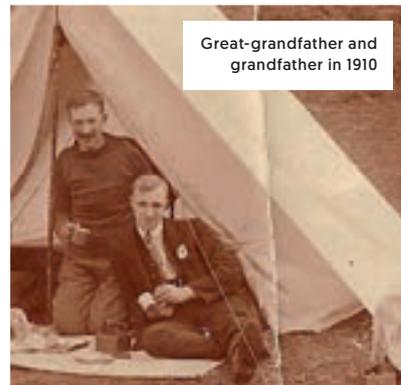
Day three was our biggest day, with 53 miles and 6,000 feet of climbing. The scenery and blue skies remained postcard perfect. One of the best descents came the next morning on the way to Durness. That afternoon we cycled around Loch Eriboll in sunshine.

We cycled along the north coast and caught the ferry to Orkney, where we were treated to yet more sunny weather. We visited Neolithic sites on the Orkney's Mainland, and enjoyed picnics and ice cream – outdoors! – on beaches and cliffs.

We returned to Aberdeen on an overnight Northlink ferry. It was raining when we disembarked!



Above: Cycle path on the old Severn Bridge
Below: Horse riders at Overton Down



Great-grandfather and grandfather in 1910

England

A genealogical journey

A cycling great-grandfather inspired Richard Blackshaw

BICYCLE OWNERSHIP CAME within reach of the ordinary working man or women in the late 19th century. My great-grandfather, a postman in Torquay, purchased one and raced around the Devon lanes at every opportunity. In 1889 he discovered that postmen in Manchester received one shilling per week more, so he applied for a transfer to the north.

In February 1890 he set off on his much-prized bicycle to cycle the 260 miles to Manchester, leaving his wife and child behind until he had sourced suitable lodgings. In the interim, he would regularly cycle the 520 miles round trip to visit his wife and child in Torquay!

My great grandfather decided to repeat this adventure in 1904, and convinced his son, my 14-year-old grandfather, to join him. There was much rough sleeping in farmer's barns, but there was always plenty of food and his father seemed to be popular at the farms along the way. After the trip, my grandfather vowed not ride a bicycle again! However, the picture shows him camping with his father in 1910.

In 2013, I tried to find cycling maps from the period to follow my great-grandfather's route, but I got carried away and rode LEJOG instead. It must be in the genes!

South West & Wales

Severn wanderers

The kindness of strangers was key on Lucy Coyne's three-day tour of SW England and Wales

Chance encounters are part of the joy of cycle touring for me. This year's annual trip with female friends – our first unsupported – was no exception. It was a circular loop of 180 miles, taking in Bristol, Bath, Gloucester, and Chepstow, crossing the River Severn twice.

We began on the Bristol and Bath Railway Path, cruising down scented, vividly green tunnels of new growth, sunlight dappling the path ahead. Then... psst! Our first puncture.

"You all right?" Nathan the Deliveroo rider and ex-aerospace engineer asked. He couldn't release the wheel nuts either. Luckily Colin and Peter

were cycling by and had a spanner.

Trying to make up time after savouring the towpath ride from Bath, we made it to Devizes on the A361. But the light was falling, so with 15 miles to go we began looking for transport. We found it: we were the last delivery of the day for Jason the Yodel van driver!

On day two we took lanes and bridleways through the emerald and yellow patchwork of the Wiltshire and Gloucestershire countryside. At one point we rode alongside trainee racehorses at Overton Down.

Day three began with a lift from taxi driver AJ, who piled us and our bikes into to his vehicle to ferry us through the darkness to Gloucester. We cycled across the border into Wales, past Tintern Abbey, and to another encounter with race horses at Chepstow. For our second crossing of the River Severn, we used the old bridge. The tide was out, the mud was glutinous, and the sky was very blue, with wispy clouds high above the soaring supports.



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