



The scenic route from Newry to Belfast



Sixteen miles of quiet riverside views

## British Isles

# Folding freedom

Using ferries, trains and his Brompton, **David Mytton** toured Wales, the island of Ireland and Scotland

I've had a Brompton for years but belatedly decided to try it for touring because it works so well with trains. From Bangor in North Wales I followed the west coast of Anglesey round to Holyhead: quiet, flat lanes with Snowdonia in the distance.

I took a relaxing ferry to Dublin, where I admired the architecture and then Phoenix Park, where I saw deer and a half marathon. Further north it was misty, which felt appropriate for the ancient Hill of Tara and Newgrange, a site older than Stonehenge. Other highlights included a pleasant cycle track by the River Boyne into Drogheda.

Between Dundalk and Newry I was surprised by the lack of any border post, despite all the recent EU-related talks. Signs were simply no

longer in kilometres and post boxes became red. The Mourne Coastal Route had views to the Isle of Man and the Lakeland Fells.

A short ferry ride brought me to the Ards Peninsula and Donaghadee, which was the main port for Portpatrick in Scotland until 1826. From Bangor (County Down) I went by train to Larne. Today ferries don't go to Portpatrick nor Stranraer, which came after it, but to Cairnryan. A pavement and then a cycle track link the two, with about a mile



Between Portavogie and Ballyhalbert

gap between. It's worth letting the lorries leave the ferry first!

The next day was one of my best in over 50 years of cycle touring, thanks to the Kirkpatrick C2C. Views all around, quiet lanes and a pause in Wigtown, Scotland's book town. Finally Dumfries, trains home and the only mechanical issue: a slow puncture, caused by a thorn.

Would I tour on the Brompton again? Sometimes, yes. It was slightly slower, but landscapes and people are as enjoyable as miles covered. I averaged 40 miles per day. A big advantage is the ease of using trains. I also took it into my hotel room most nights, suitably protected in its bag.

## Lincolnshire

# The Water Rail Way

**Barry Barton** sings the praises of a riverside cycle track through the Lincolnshire fens

**IF A LONG-DISTANCE** off-road trail like Rebellion Way were to be established in Lincolnshire, it would surely include much of the existing Water Rail Way. This route closely follows the River Witham for 34 miles between Lincoln and Boston.

The first half, from Stamp End in Lincoln to Kirkstead Bridge, follows the line of the old Great Northern Railway, which was built along the left bank of the river – and was for a couple of years around 1850 part of the East Coast Main Line between London and Doncaster. Apart from 400 yards on the B1190 through Bardney and just over a mile of farm track nearby, the whole of this section of trail is traffic-free tarmac.

It's teeming with riverside birdlife, and there are short detours to the ruins of Bardney, Topholme and Kirkstead Abbeys. This section of the trail has been given a Tennyson theme, with some rather good trilside artwork, referencing specifically the Lady of Shalott and the river itself. On either side of the river there were once 'long fields of barley and of rye'. Today the rye has given way to the far less romantic potatoes, sugar beet and oilseed rape.

I've described the first half of the route as traffic free but straying farm animals

can be a hazard. After Kirkstead Bridge, the Water Rail Way follows minor roads for the next 13.5 miles, rejoining the River Witham at Langrick Bridge for the final 4.5 miles.



Celebrating barley and rye