



South-east England

Laid-back commuting

Over recent months, a secondhand velomobile has transformed **Richard James's** journey to work

Last November I bought a secondhand Allweder A4 velomobile for my 12.5 mile each-way commute between Southampton and Winchester. I've wanted one since the 1990s so when this one came up for sale on the BHPV Facebook page, I decided now was the time.

I did a trial run of the route one Sunday. On downhill stretches I was doing

30-40mph but longer climbs would see me doing 8-9mph. On the flat I was averaging 18mph. Overall journey times were similar to an ordinary bike but I was more comfortable.

I then started commuting on it, leaving at about 6.30am to give me plenty of time and quieter roads, and setting off for home at 5pm. Journeys have largely been in the dark and some sections of the route are unlit. The lights on the Allweder are good but not quite up to the standard of car headlights. After the first few trips, I removed the hood for better visibility.

I am now getting used to anticipating gear shifts, and changing down into a low gear before coming to a stop. You want to be in a lower gear than on a normal bike for pulling away as you cannot really push yourself off.

In cold and wet weather I have used the rain cover and stayed very comfortable, and there is space inside to stash the bits I need to take to work. You have to get used to attracting attention. Usually they're positive comments like "Sick ride, mate", but I suspect some horn toots from passing motorists aren't friendly greetings.

There are a few things I would like to tweak on it, and the wiring could do with tidying up. But I have a machine that I can commute comfortably in, in a comparable time to most other methods, and that I can tinker with as well. Happy days.



Ireland

Happy end-to-ending

How do you cycle tour together when only one of you rides? **Chris Metcalfe** found a solution

WHILE I'VE HAD numerous cycling adventures, they've been without my partner, Christine. We decided on a joint trip to Ireland, with me cycling from Mizen Head to Malin Head and Christine driving. Christine planned the route and the miles each day. [You don't argue with a Weakest Link winner!]

We crossed on the Cork ferry and camped for the first night near Baltimore. Next morning I headed for the start at Mizen Head. The next nine days and 465 miles – through Bantry, Killarney, Limerick, Galway, Donegal, Letterkenny and Buncrana – flew by.

We settled into a daily routine of: breakfast together; my morning departure; Christine moving the tent to its new location; an afternoon coffee on my arrival. Then the rest of the day was spent sightseeing, eating and looking for Irish pub music.

We enjoyed stunning scenery throughout, particularly the Dingle Peninsula and the karst landscape of the Burren, although clouds hid the view over the Caha Pass. We were pleasantly surprised by the camping at Killarney and the fish and chips at the Dingle chippy. Local people offered warmth and friendliness throughout.

Near the end, crossing Lough Swilly on the small Buncrana ferry in stormy conditions, I

felt sure my late mum was giving me encouragement.

I met Christine at the finish at Malin Head in thankfully dry conditions. A wonderful shared experience!

