



Fact file Questioning time

Distance: 7,006km (4,353 miles) so far.

Route strategy: I start with the BCQ online map and Question Book, then mark checkpoints onto the paper Ultimate UK Cycle Route Planner Map (walkwheecycletrust.org.uk). This gives me an idea of how checkpoints and mapped cycle routes will link up. Google Maps helps me locate campsites. Finally, I use Komoot to plan each day's ride.

Favourite destinations so far: The Italian Chapel, Orkney, for its history and human story. Parkgate, Wirral, for childhood memories of visits to my grandparents. Trinity Bridge, Crowland, Lincolnshire, for novelty value. Ashdown Forest, East Sussex, for glorious off-road riding.

Toughest BCQ rides so far: Boscastle, Cornwall, for steep hills and a day of thunderstorms. Heckington Windmill, Lincolnshire, for little route choice and bonkers traffic. Beachy Head – a steep ascent and ferocious side wind with a fully loaded bicycle.

Bike used: Surly Disc Trucker in full touring/camping setup.

Navigation: Ultimate UK Cycle Route Planner Map for an overview. Komoot routes saved onto my Wahoo Elemnt Roam for day-to-day navigation. Pages from an AA Road Atlas, with the checkpoints marked, as a backup.

I'm glad I have... Wahoo Elemnt Roam. A paper copy of the BCQ Question Book.

I wish I'd known... The enormity of the continuous cycling line idea and how uncompromising I would become about sticking to it!



Clockwise from bottom photo: Off-road trails across Ashdown Forest. West Cowes on the Isle of Wight, where Sarah managed six checkpoints in three days. Overlooking London from the Royal Observatory, Greenwich

And the honesty cake-fridges were well stocked.

Boats and bicycles are the best travel combination, and the ferries were all running. On the Orkney Islands, I visited standing stones, prehistoric settlements, fascinating features remaining from WWII, and the Old Man of Hoy. I learned the sad story of Betty Corrigan, who died by suicide.

Meandering south

Back on the Scottish mainland, I went to look at John o' Groats to say I'd been there. Then I pedalled to Dunnet Head, the most northerly point of mainland Britain. Exhilarated, I stood shrouded in cloud, feeling the void in front of me. The base of the lighthouse was barely visible, while seabirds shrieked and wheeled in and out of sight. Turning around, I imagined the kilometres of cycling ahead of me, stretching away southwards.

The coast road was crawling with campervanners doing the North Coast 500, so I diverted through Strathnaver, which was empty.

Meandering from east to west and east again, I answered BCQ questions at battlefields, Rob Roy's grave and monuments to notable figures I had never heard of. I had planned to head to the Western Isles but the year was marching on. While camped beside Loch Ness, I realised that if I continued with my 'let's see what happens' plan, I would still be riding in December.

I then did some proper planning and took a more direct route from Glasgow to the border.

In England, I collected BCQ points at an RSPB sanctuary, the Liver Building, a planned village, a mariner's beacon, waterwheels and a cliff railway. By the time I reached Exeter, the days were short, the nights were cool and the weather was mixed. I took a few rest days at my daughter's home to hide from Storm Alex, before a loop round the north side of Dartmoor and a final few days to collect the checkpoints on the south coast of Cornwall.

I reached Lizard Point in mid October after pedalling 3,188km in almost three months. In completing my north-to-south linear route, I'd ticked off 51 checkpoints. I took the train back to Exeter from Penzance. With 351 places still to visit, this BCQ project was going to take a while!

An intermittent journey

Nearly a year later, in September 2021, I returned to Penzance by train to pick up where I left off. I explored the north coast of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, visiting BCQ checkpoints in those three counties. Never again would I have to push my bike up a steep, narrow, sunken Devon lane!

At Taunton, I paused again. The world was starting to return to pre-Covid accessibility. I was able to fulfil my touring adventure plans for Europe and then South America. But the BCQ Continuous Cycling Line project was still on the back burner. In April 2024, I was back at Taunton station.

First I had to head northwards to visit the Somerset O3 checkpoint, which I hadn't been able to find in

Challenges & checkpoints
Try a fundraising challenge, then visit nearby BCQ points – see p14