

Sunday, November 22, 2009

Way of the Roses Challenge Ride 2009, Ben Cope.



It all started on Saturday. I arrived with my friend Matt at Morecambe at 20:00 and booked into our B&B. Thankfully they allowed us to store our bikes in their lounge area so they were safe. After booking in we went to our rooms which were basic but we were only there for a night.

After this I took a trip into town to view the Midland Hotel which was smaller than I had imagined. Soon after we went to the Eric Morecambe statue and then came across a crazy Chinese restaurant and had dinner. Then with a 6am start the next morning it was straight to bed in anticipation of the epic ride to come...

We awoke and showered and stretched then went to get breakfast. Due to the early hour the hotelier had put on a cereal and toast self service breakfast. After this it started to rain and rain. Oh no!

After setting up our bikes - and finding Matt had forgotten his maps - we set off and were on our way by 7am in the dark but luckily the rain had stopped. We were in Lancaster in no time at all and then to Settle where the rain started pouring down.

This next part of the ride was just rain, rain, rain so we decided to change the route and went to Skipton where we took shelter in a Little Chef. After warming up we set off to our destination and half way point Harrogate, at 73 miles. Penny Pot Lane was a joy to go down and a cooked breakfast was waiting for us at my house. After a 1 1/2hr break it was time for part 2, starting off with Knaresborough, Ferrensby and Arkendale.

At the Aldwark toll bridge the man said 'How far have you come today then - from Morecambe?' and we said 'Well actually - Yes!' He laughed. Then on to Easingwold and Malton. On the way I had some chips as I was starving. By now our lights were turned on and we decided to follow the B1253. Fortunately I had my amazing 1000 lumens light - the ride would have failed without it. Then terrible wind and rain started again. There were a

few tough climbs but they seemed even harder because we had already cycled over 100 miles.

The wind was crazy and we were pedalling at walking speed which made our average speeds plummet disappointingly - we were averaging 14.5mph up until this point. Then disaster! For the last 10 miles my wonderful light failed because the battery only lasted for 3.5hrs on full beam. I had my normal front light, but it was more a light to be seen than for the rider to see. Thankfully civilization and the lights of Bridlington were not far away.

The last 5 miles seemd to go on for hours even though we blasted along at 19mph. Finally we arrived at the sea and almost got blown over before we went into the strangest pub I've ever been in with a crazy man playing guitars and hundreds of grannies playing bingo!

It was finally over. 150 miles in a day took longer than I expected but with the wind, rain and dark we felt just under 11 hours was quite respectable cycling, possibly the fastest crossing so far for the new Way of the Roses route . A fantastic route and fantastic riding buddy, definitely one to do in the summer! Ben