

Colin Foord's 'Mega Bike Ride'.

A long-time climbing club friend of mine (and long standing President) Colin Foord once mentioned he'd planned a challenge cycle ride in North Wales but never ridden it: All the major passes in Snowdonia in one continuous ride. This attracted my imagination, and after a year or two procrastination I posted a message on the Macclesfield Wheelers and Mynydd Climbing Club forums offering a date in September for a joint attempt .

There was a fair bit of interest from both clubs at first; but after I posted a .gpx (map) of the route it all went a bit quiet.

Unfortunately, I could only book the climbing club hut (Blean-y-Nant) for the Saturday night, which meant finding your own sleeping arrangements Friday, or camp.

The nearer the date got, the quieter the interest became. The number of other activities happening around the same time frame were also a distraction. Some of the 'I'm definitely up for it' individuals found some fairly unbelievable excuses to back out: Computer crashes, did Wild Wales challenge two weeks ago and still tired etc, but the best (and this is absolutely true) excuse was 'I've had my retina's lasered out and can't come!

So, I wasn't expecting huge crowds, but was disappointed to find just one other rider, Fred Wardle (Macclesfield Wheelers) join me early Saturday morning. We waited until 10am before setting off in cool, slightly damp conditions...

I know this area fairly well, and so had planned an excellent route avoiding all nasty roads. We cycled from ByN, down to Conwy, Sychnant Pass, the back roads through Abergwngregyn, Llanllechid to Bethesda. We crossed over the Nant Francon valley at Bethesda to ascent to Ogwen (via the old quarry road). Then raced down through Capel Curig, up Pen-y-Pass and down to Pete's Eat's, Llanberis for our first stop of the day (82k done).

The sun came out as we left Llanberis on the old road (running parallel to the A4086) heading towards Caernarfon via Bryn Bras (castle), Ceunant. At Groeslon we picked up the railway line (cycleway) towards Penygroes, then the B4418 through Nantlle, Rhyd-Ddu to join the A4085 to Beddgelert, where fortunately, the cafe was still open (2nd stop at 128k)!

Decision time! Should we continue on the Ffestiniog to complete the ride, or bale out and ride back from Beddgelert to Capel, Betwy-y-Coed and back to Trefrew? A 10am start is too late at this time of year without lights, so we took the later course of action. At approx 6pm we had a swift pint in the Fairy Falls before the final climb, and yes, we DID cycle up the steep road all the way back to ByN.

Stats: 168.5km 2,285m elevation, 7hrs 15mins moving time. It was a very tough day, in perfect cycling conditions, on some stunning roads.

When I got back to ByN I found another Macclesfield Wheeler, Joe Brownhill had arrived in the afternoon. he wanted to go cycling with me the following day... How could I say no! Another 65 miles were ridden the following day (see attached photo of Joe Brownhill on Bangor Pier and in Nant Francon ascending to Ogwen).

So, the gauntlet is still on the floor for next year!

David Harbottle

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