



Traffic free in the Yorkshire Dales



Danby is hemmed in by steep hills

## North Yorkshire

### E-bike paradise

**Mike Newton** reckons the North York Moors are ideal for e-biking

**WE WERE ON** our way from Great Ayton to Robin Hood's Bay: 66 miles return with 2,100m of ascent. We were apprehensive. Would our legs hold out? Would our batteries hold out? There were four of us: two on e-bikes, two totally leg-powered.

We cycled along the Esk Valley following the river and the railway – although the railway engineers had forged a much flatter route on their way to Whitby than the road builders. We cycled up and down through Castleton, Glaisdale, Egton Bridge, Grosmont, and Sleights, then veered south to Robin Hood's Bay.

On the way we rode up Limber Hill, just a quarter of a mile long but with a maximum gradient of 33%. My legs almost gave out despite my e-bike's motor; I'm 71 with failing knees. The hill at Ugglebarnby was more than twice as long, although our two leg-powered cyclists were still smiling at the top. I was too: the e-bike's motor could handle this one more easily.

Our return route passed through Danby, where we had a café stop. In their masks, Alec and Barbara looked like two gangsters about to steal delicious cakes.

This ride was just one of 28 that we managed to complete in 2020, all in and around the North York Moors. Each was about 60 miles with up to 2,000m of ascent. The North York Moors is a fabulous area for cycling as long you enjoy hills or have an e-bike. Mine has a 600Wh battery and I carry a spare in my pannier.

I've created YouTubes of some of our rides. Search for 'GASBAGSMike' and filter the playlist to 'North York Moors Cycling'.

## Northern England

# Slow Way of the Roses

Coast to coast journeys don't have to be a race against time. **Ann Davies** took it steady

**T**wo years ago in mid July, before the schools broke up, I rode (and pushed) the Way of the Roses.

Some cyclists ride this 170-mile route from Morecambe to Bridlington in two days. Including getting to the start and home afterwards, it took me nine.

Each day I rode between 18 and 23 miles – three to four hours' cycling for me, with plenty of time to stop and enjoy the view, the butterflies, the National Trust venues, the coffee and the ice-cream. Travelling alone gave me the freedom to stop or make route changes at will and to enjoy the moment.

The first three days through Lancashire into Yorkshire were extremely hilly. I chose routes that took me off the beaten track, along stony bridleways and past hay meadows full of flowers. In Ingleton there was a World War Two weekend, with vintage vehicles and dress, and the music of Vera Lynn. A path through a tunnel out of Clapham made for a dramatic exit from the village and led to a track in open countryside. Ingleborough loomed over the quiet lanes.

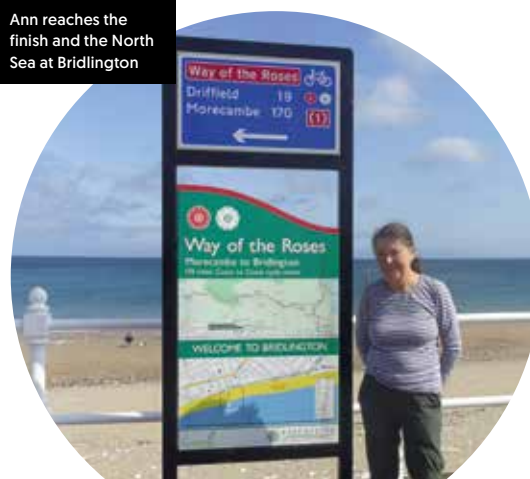
The weather was breezy, pleasantly warm but not hot. After Fountains Abbey and Ripon, I was down on the plain. An

evening in York was made memorable by attending evensong at the Minster, followed by a visit to the cinema to see Yesterday, Danny Boyle's film based on the music of the Beatles.

Beyond York, the hills of the Yorkshire Wolds rose in the distance. A fascinating area of narrow chalk valleys lay between Pocklington and Huggate. Then the route swooped along the tops to Driffield. A climb up from Burton Agnes led to a gradual descent into Bridlington.

I find 'slow cycling' is best done alone, but it isn't lonely. Far more conversations with strangers happen when I'm alone. My most memorable, near constant companion was the scent of lime blossom.

Ann reaches the finish and the North Sea at Bridlington





Salter Fell is crossed by a remote-feeling gravel track



John did his two-day tour during the winter

## Northern Ireland

### Belfast and beyond

**John Robson** enjoyed an off-season tour in Northern Ireland

**SOUTH WEST SCOTLAND**, where I live, is blessed with great cycling country and quiet lanes. It's also well positioned for a trip across the Irish Sea to Northern Ireland. So when a window of settled weather was forecast over the winter, I took the opportunity – and a ferry from Cairnryan to Belfast.

This does involve sharing the bowels of the ferry with lorries, then navigating the bike route into Belfast through the dockland. But with helpful ferry staff and clear directions on the cycleway, it was safe and uncomplicated.

I stopped over in Belfast for a dose of historical and cultural distraction; highlights include the Titanic exhibition and The Troubles tours. The plan was then to use a short circular tour of the Lough Neagh Cycleway as a taster for future trips to the north and west coasts.

The route out of Belfast to Lisburn along the flat Lagan towpath was a bird-watcher's delight. It also gave glimpses of its industrial heritage, with former mill buildings scattered along the way. A series of backroads bypassed Portadown and, as the winter light faded, I detoured to Cookstown for an overnight stop.

Day two of my 120-mile clockwise circuit was north to Toome and then around to Antrim. The route doesn't hug the shores but rambles through gentle, undulating Irish farmland, with the Lough appearing regularly into view. I had lunch in a courtyard tea shop at Antrim Castle Gardens, then embarked on the last leg to and through Belfast for the evening ferry sailing.

## Lancashire

# Salter Fell

**Paul McKearney** rode this great gravel track in the Forest of Bowland last June

Leaving Lancaster, I rode up the Lune Valley towards Hornby. A right turn at Roeburndale Road took me up to High Salter Farm where the track begins. Ingleborough, Whernside and Pen-y-ghent looked magnificent in the early summer sunshine. Ahead, the white gravel track was flat at first but stretched up and away, winding its way over Salter Fell.

Westward, a helicopter rose menacingly above the high Bowland ridge, quartering Wolfhole Crag and Ward's Stone before disappearing behind Blanch Fell. I stopped near the summit. The course of a Roman road feeds in nearby, veering down the valley to the north. The easy riding continued but my rear wheel slipped on a short

steep section of loose scree.

Then I crossed a great divide. Fewer sheep and an abundance of gorse and heather indicated grouse shooting country. The beck now fed the River Ribble, not the Lune. Tractor-tyre-gouged craters with festering muddy-black water made the going trickier. I pushed until I came to a west-leading track that accessed an impressively rustic hunting lodge beside Baxton Hill.

Back on the bike, deceptive false flats led to a sweeping descent to the Upper Ribble Valley. I could see the distinctive features of Pendle Hill in the distance, and marker posts for the Witches 400 trail guided me. A squadron of RAF jets roared over Croasdale Fell, hugging the terrain in camera-defying passes of the valley.

I descended on ochre-tinged gravel, passing a dutiful RSPB warden keeping a protective vigil. A relaxed cruise towards Slaidburn brought an unfamiliar sight: tarmac. Completing the off-road crossing took two hours twenty minutes. I had plenty of light left for a delightful warm-down ride home through the Trough of Bowland.

More at [bowlandbeyondbiketouring.blogspot.com](http://bowlandbeyondbiketouring.blogspot.com), Paul's blog.



Gravel bike? Paul used an old-school MTB



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