

YORK RALLY TOUR 2017

Day 1: Lakenheath to Woodhall Spa. 93 miles.

Good ride to Downham Market via Feltwell, Methwold Hythe, and Wissington. First coffee stop at café next to Downham Market station.

From Downham Market I took the A1122 and A1101 through Outwell to Wisbech. These roads were very quiet for A roads. I stopped in Wisbech to check the map for picking up NCR1 when I was approached by a guy walking past. It turned out he was also a cyclist, and was interested in my bike, where I had come from, and where I was going. When I mentioned NCR1, he advised me to bypass part of it on the outskirts of Wisbech as it was a really horrible off-road section.

This was the first of many people I stopped and chatted with on this journey, and meeting all these different people, whether or not they are cyclists, is one of the reasons that I enjoy touring so much.

Apart from the continual headwind, had a nice ride across South Holland (Just like our Fens, but with trees). Had a puncture just before Boston, which to make things worse it had to be the rear wheel.

My route card said left at the Market Place in Boston, and follow NCR1 signs. Sod's law, it was market day and I could not ride through market place so lost route signs.



Late lunch at Boston Quay.

From Boston there is a really good cycle way to Langrick bridge, then quiet roads to Tattershall bridge. I thought that I would have escaped all the aircraft noise that we get in Lakenheath, however the Eurofighters from Coningsby seemed even louder. Long flat straight roads into the wind for the rest of the ride into Woodhall Spa.



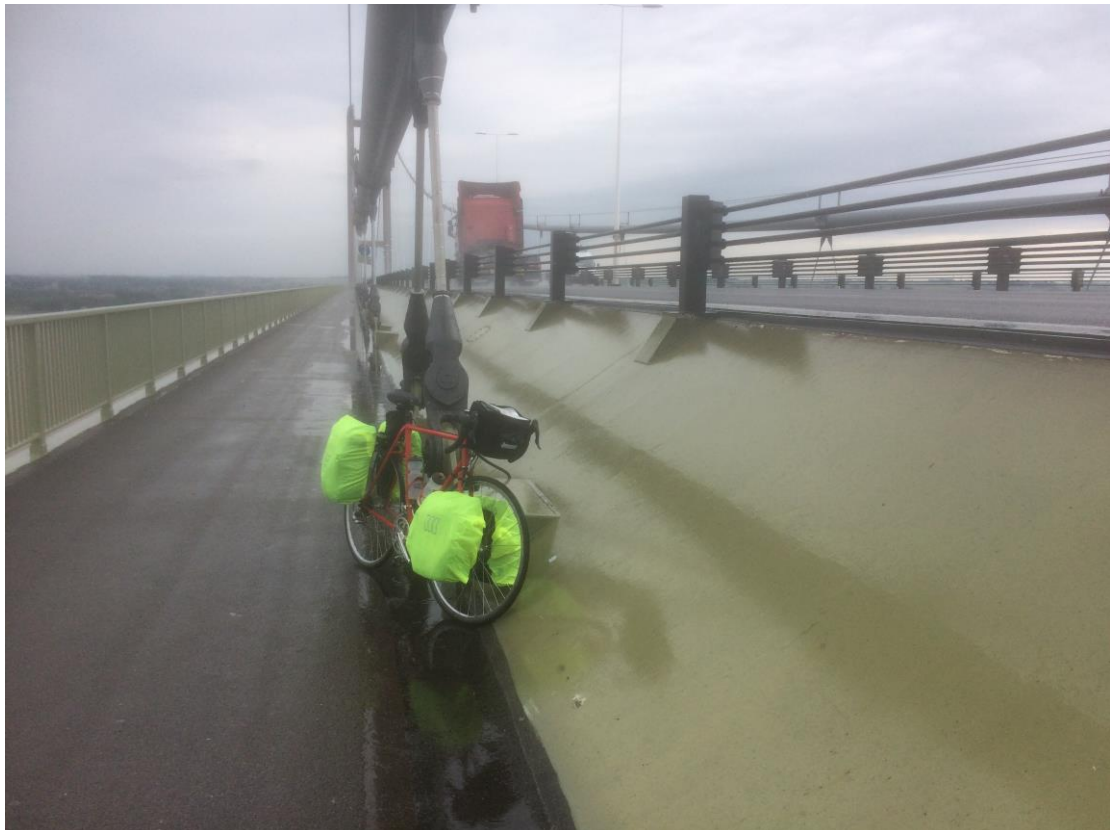
Woodhall Spa campsite, Chicken Masala with chick peas and rice for tea.

Day 2: Woodhall Spa to Blacktoft. 86 miles.

The day started bright and sunny, but the weather changed quickly. I rode round the back of Woodhall Spa to Stixwold, and on to NCR1 at Stixwold station. Rode towards Lincoln along the Rail Trail that John and Ann took us along 2 years ago. NCR1 doubles back after Lincoln so crossed footbridge to Fiskerton and Reepham and rejoined NCR1 at Scothern.

After Market Rasen the route started to climb into the Lincolnshire Wolds, and got really steep at Walesby. Decided to take the easy way out, and walked up 2 of the hills, which was still difficult with a fully laden steel touring bike. NCR1 then takes you off road. 6 miles along overgrown farm tracks on a touring bike with full panniers was not much fun. Then the rain started, eventually becoming torrential, time to fit the pannier covers!!

During this downpour I was lucky enough to come across a garden centre with a café. As I was parking the bike, the owner came to the door and told me to bring my bike indoors as it was too wet to leave it outside. Had a hot drink, and a huge piece of coffee and walnut cake, but again no sausage rolls. Carried on to Barton upon Humber, where the NCR1 signs seemed to disappear. I could see the bridge, but could not get to it. Eventually found way onto bridge, but on Eastern side. At end of bridge could not find signs for NCR65 to Selby, only NCR65 to Hessle. I think that it would have been signed from Western side of bridge. Went into Hessle and found signs for NCR65 Selby.



Crossing the Humber bridge. The longest single span suspension bridge in the world that you can cycle across.

NCR65 follows a really good cycle path along the North bank of the river. At the end it turns sharply onto tarmac road on a sharp corner. There is a very high sleeping policeman just round the corner to stop bikes speeding round onto the track. Unfortunately it was not the sort of thing you want to hit on a fully laden touring bike, I hit the ground very hard, damaging knee, hip, elbow and shoulder.

The next 20 miles to my second campsite were very hard, as I was suffering after the fall. There was a long off road section before coming back onto tarmac roads.

Reached site at Blacktoft, had complete site to myself, very quiet night.



Humber bridge from Hessele.

Day 3: Friday. 35 miles.

Pleasant ride towards Selby on NCR65. Crossed over the lock at Long Drax. Stopped to have a drink and something to eat. The lock keeper came over for a chat, and gave me some tips for the next part of the route.

He was also a cyclist and was riding coast to coast the next morning from Morecambe. The next section into Selby was off road again, but quite easy. After Selby the route goes North to Riccall where you join the Solar cycle way. This cycle way is dead straight to York. All the planets in our solar system are scaled out along the route, ending at the Sun in York.

Had a good weekend at the rally, the trade show was good. Spa Cycles had a large stand showing their range of touring and Audax bikes. They also had their wheel builder demonstrating wheel building all weekend.

The only downside to the weekend was the theft of 2 bikes from the lightweight camping section. However, I did hear on Monday night that one had been recovered.

Due to the injuries I sustained on Thursday, and that Sue's car had broken down, I decided to return by train.

Would any members be interested in a 5-6 day UK tour next June, and possibly a 10 day continental tour later in the year?



Solar cycle way.

Bert Woodhead