

## The Trans Pennine Trail (York Trip)

### Monday 4<sup>th</sup> August Day 1

Despite the mixed forecast of previous days, we had been blessed with a beautiful sunny day for the start of our quest. Wigan North Western 08:55am everyone was on time and we had managed to get all four bikes booked on the same train for the short journey to Warrington. Bank Quay Station and first objective was to find the trail, Paul M took the lead and off we set for Hornsea, some of us at least, Paul B was riding with us towards Glossop before doubling back and heading for home. Trail found, we weaved our way through Warrington before Denis assumed his position at the head of the peloton; as per usual it was pedal to the metal with Roy in close attendance glued to his rear wheel (sound familiar or is it just me), passed through Lymm, Altrincham and Carrington stopping briefly for a nature break along the way. Paul M confided that the pace was a little to hot for him, not to worry he got told, they will tire and the first hills will slow them down quite a bit, only problem was the hills only kicked in later in the day, what had he let himself in for!

Ashton-on-Mersey, Stretford Meadows, Sale and Chorlton Water Parks all passed by in the blink of an eye, well it would with Denis leading. Next up Northenden and our stop for lunch, not the most opulent of places it must be said. Pub was a no-go, didn't serve food and also according to Denis was a bit on the rough side. Chippy was open and a couple of park benches beckoned, so slum it we did, for today at least. Lunch consumed and with 22 miles covered from Warrington, leaving a further 16 to Glossop Paul B bid his farewell and headed back for home. So far so good, no real problems encountered, couple of signposts missed, that we had to double check on; this navigating was easy! Didsbury next up followed by Heaton Mersey and then Stockport, our first real challenge. Got through there no problem, Reddish Vale then Haughton Green the scene of our first navigational mishap. Not sure how, but we ended up following a different route, heading completely in the opposite direction. Realised our mistake after about 5 miles, make that 10 in total, not what we wanted at all. Roy was not amused to say the least, back on track the route became quite hilly, quite hilly indeed, thought Roy was going to throw in the towel at one stage but we persevered and made it to the digs at 6:00pm, eight hours after leaving Warrington.

Eric our host for the night greeted us on our arrival, very friendly and helpful, quite a character actually. Three S's out of the way it was time to hit the local pub for an evening meal and some much deserved liquid refreshment. Upshot of the day was that Denis had lived up to his reputation and was to be demoted to back-marker, not sure how long that would last! Back at the digs it was a nice cuppa before turning in round about 10:30pm. All in all a good, but hard days cycling, what would tomorrow have in store. 52 miles cycled, not sure how, was only 38 according to the map!!!!

## Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> August Day 2

09:00am breakfast time, very nice breakfast actually and chance to sort out the pecking order for the day ahead. Despite being demoted Denis was given the lead again, takes a special person to take the flak when things go awry and still step up to the fore again, Denis is that special person, water off a ducks back springs to mind. Roy obviously and perhaps wisely deciding that it's easier to be critical when you don't have the responsibility of leading. Longendale Trail heading for the Woodhead Pass over the Pennines was the day's first objective and what an objective it was, quite a slog up the hills but the views were absolutely stunning, Happened upon a group of "Venuswalen's", not sure which country, or planet for that matter they were from, can't blame Denis for that one Roy. Anyway, met 3 Venezuelan's, (from Manchester of all places) they were doing the route as well but over a different number of days. Chatted with them for a while before bidding farewell as they continued their journey. About a half mile or so later we bumped into them again, Denis's reputation it appears had transcended international boundaries, even heard of his notoriety in Venezuela; the lads had done the route previously and were concerned about us finding our way through Penistone. They would be our escorts, what a set of blokes and what a reputation Denis must have!

Took us down a hill called Windle Edge leading into Dunford Bridge, not saying it was steep but we hit 37 mph on the way down, the joys of cycling! Penistone negotiated the lads were on their way again leaving us to fend for ourselves once more. 10 miles further along the trail at an RSPB Bird Sanctuary called Dearne Valley – Old Moor we met them yet again, must have thought we were stalking them! Last time we would meet though, we had a mere few miles to Mexborough while they were heading for Selby some 40 miles further afield. Farewells exchanged yet again it decided to rain and boy did it do just that. Found the hotel okay, bit pricey this one but well worth it after a hard day in the saddle.

Usual formalities undertaken, we sat down to another great evening meal along with a few pints for good measure. Journey was taking its toll though; we were tucked up in bed by half-nine, (make that beds).

A better and rather enjoyable day we all agreed, thanks in no small part to our new found friends the "Venuswalen's". 53 miles cycled, only stated 40 on the map, your guess as good as mine where the other 13 came from! Maybe our friends had taken us on a wild goose chase; don't think so they were top blokes, map must be wrong!

### Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> August Day 3

Another day, another hearty breakfast, just what was needed ready for a hard day in the saddle. Back on the trail heading for Sprotbrough, hadn't been cycling long when we came across some of the nicest scenery of the route, quite picturesque as we cycled along the banks of the river Don. Next port of call was the village of Sykehouse; decided a photo shoot seemed like a good idea. Whilst posing for photos we noticed some flyers pinned to various telegraph poles, being the inquisitive types we just had to have a look. Nothing spectacular, someone's cat had gone missing and a substantial reward was being offered for its safe return. No sooner had we seen the flyers than the missing cat came into view, our lucky day or so it seemed. Tried to ring the numbers without much success, could only see pound signs at this time. Hopes of financial reward were soon dashed though when a lady in the village informed us that it was not the cat in question. Either that or she wanted to claim the reward herself, shouldn't be cynical!

Disappointment put aside we got back to the task in hand, destination Selby. Our digs for the night were located in Goole; at least that's what we thought! Goole was a few miles off the trail route, so we knew there was going to be a bit more cycling to do, just how much we were yet to discover. Address was Station Road, so assuming it would be near the Station that's where we headed. Found the Station okay but not Station Road, asked several people but no-one knew of it, even asked a Policewoman, surely she would know! Unfortunately not, needed help from the Venuswalen's, they would have known! Last resort we rang the pub, spoke to the landlord who informed us that the pub was in fact on Station Road, but Station Road was in Rawcliffe about 5 miles away by road, that didn't go down well, or a couple of miles along, wait for it The Aire & Calder Navigation Knottingley & Goole Canal, that sounded a better option but try asking for it. Try we did several times but yet again nobody had heard of it, not surprising really. Eventually we found the canal and set off down the towpath, understand now why no one had heard of it, no one had ever cycled along it. To say it was horrendous was an understatement, it was more like undergrowth than towpath, really energy sapping just what we needed after a long days ride. Left Goole Station at 5:00pm and eventually got to the pub some 2 hours later, completely and utterly knackered!

Landlord (Phil) greeted us and made us feel welcome; nothing was too much trouble for him. Even did us a deal on the accommodation. All in all a slight misunderstanding on the pub's location resulted in a rather tiring end to the day's journey. Another 52 miles cycled, but all's well that ends well or so they say. Not sure Roy would agree, more fuel for the fire! Ah well. Another 52 miles cycled today there certainly mounting up!

## Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> August Day 4

Mornings soon come round when you're tired and this one was no exception. Breakfast consumed we were fuelled for the morning ahead, first task was to find our way back to the trail, certainly weren't going back via the canal, that's for sure. Trail found off we headed first to Hull and onwards to Hornsea ultimate goal.

Stopped mid-morning for a coffee break in a place called Welton, ordered our drinks and chatted while waiting for them to be served. Waiter came with our order and asked if we could drink up in the next ten minutes, apparently they had a private party booked in and didn't want us around the place, nice to know your customs appreciated. Shortly afterwards a couple entered the café to order some food etc. told them what had been said to us and sure enough they were refused service, strange place Welton. As requested we took our time over the drinks and left the café some 30 minutes later, we do aim to please.

Back on the bikes we continued our journey stopping for an early lunch before we got to Hull. Who should happen to be in the same place? Only the couple refused service earlier, got chatting to them and found out they were from Holland, the earlier experience must have seemed quite strange to them, what a way to treat visitors. We did our bit for foreign relations anyway, the couple were also heading for Hull, aboard quite a nifty looking tandem, the handlebars could be swivelled round to allow easier access through the dreaded cycle gates and could fold up for easier transportation, very nice bit of kit.

Accompanied our Dutch friends on the way to Hull, they could certainly make it shift when they wanted to. Highlight of Roy's trip came when I tried to pass them going up a hill, drew level with them just as they found another gear and blew me away. Certainly made Roy chuckle anyway. Hull in sight and what a nightmare trying to find our way through, very heavy traffic coupled with poor or non-existent signage (that's our excuse anyway) made for a rather hair raising experience. But we survived the ordeal and continued on towards Hornsea our journeys end. With only a few miles remaining Denis had a blow out, happened to be using a self-healing tube and true to the claim it did seal itself, not before spraying some kind of rubber solution all over the bike and his legs. All that was required was a bit of to re-inflate the tyre. Just before reaching Hornsea he had another blow out this time proper one, gashed tyre this time but once again the tube held and got him to our destination. To say we were glad the journey was over is a bit of an understatement, but what an experience, one we certainly won't forget in a hurry. Would we do it again? Think we would but in the opposite direction, just to mix things up a bit.

Met some really nice people and some Aliens as well if Roy's spelling is anything to go by. All that was left to do was enjoy our last night away, knowing we wouldn't have to get back on the bikes the following morning. Jim Had kindly offered to drive over from Wigan and transport us and the bikes back home, what a bloke! Mileage for the day was 52 making a grand total of 210, according to the trail map it should have been about 170, got our moneys worth anyway, watering hole here we come!

Hope you've enjoyed reading about our little adventure as much as we did taking part in it, bookings being taken for next year if anyone's interested. Might be worth getting Jim to organise it for us though!