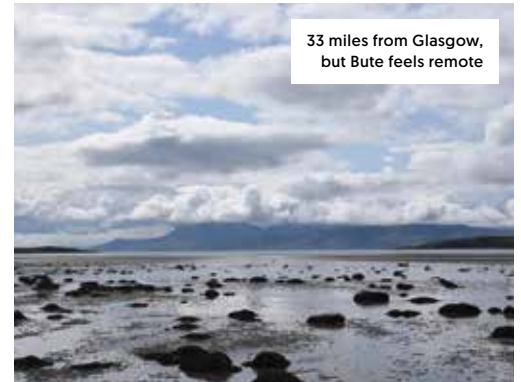




Crossing the River Fal in Cornwall



33 miles from Glasgow, but Bute feels remote

Scotland

Beautiful Bute

*Needing a break, **Bill Henderson** took his Brompton to the island*

MY DAD HAD died a couple of weeks earlier, and I was struggling to come to terms with this. So one morning when the rain looked like having a day off, I grabbed a banana, a bottle of water, and unfolded the Brompton. I chose it because it's easier on the train, and I had picked a 15-mile circular route on the Isle of Bute which I planned to ride slowly. I'd cycled on Bute before and knew it was undulating rather than hilly so I wouldn't miss the road bike too much.

The first highlight was Wemyss Bay station and pier, a marvellous example of late-Victorian architecture. The rail platform sweeps gently down and round to the ferry to Bute. The island itself is a cyclist's paradise. Road surfaces are good, the scenery great, and outside Rothesay traffic is almost non-existent.

I soon arrived at St Ninian's bay. I found a Sheffield stand partly submerged in long grass. An easy walk took me to the tidal St Ninian's island with its ruined chapel. It is an amazingly peaceful spot where your only company is the wading birds feeding on the long sandy beach.

Back on the bike, I continued my clockwise loop back to Rothesay for a late lunch. Sadly, 15 miles didn't justify the very tasty-looking chocolate cake I saw so I virtuously ate my banana and wondered if St Ninian's halo would transfer to me! It didn't, but this day trip was a wonderful tonic and a reminder that tours don't need to be long, arduous, or well-planned.

United Kingdom

Lizard to Cape Wrath

***Sandy D Franklin** cycled from the UK mainland's most southerly point to its most north-westerly*

The idea was simple: cycle from the Lizard in Cornwall to Cape Wrath in Scotland, experiencing crisp autumn days and the magnificent diversity of British landscapes. Departing on a fine October day, we soon discovered the steep hills, wooded ravines, and pretty villages of the West Country. There are places that stick in your mind when cycle touring: Dartmoor was one, with its granite tors, clapper bridges, and oak woodlands ablaze with autumn colours.

Then a storm hit with 50mph winds. Cycling became walking over the Severn Bridge, and lanes became small streams through the Wye Valley. Some days, riding in torrential rain, you wonder why you are doing this, but then the rain eases, you look up at green hills and your spirits soar.

Heading north we stayed in Youth Hostels where possible. From Carlisle we followed the coast, passing Caerlaverock, where barnacle geese flew noisily overhead. The rolling hills of the Southern Uplands imitated waves of big ocean swells, the River

Nith valley a silver ribbon. One frosty morning, Andy Goldsworthy's slate cairn poised eerily on a hillside. On Arran, we descended to Lochranza as the sun set behind the Kintyre peninsular. Stags roared in the hills.

We took ferries between Arran and Kintyre, Mallaig and Skye, riding with views of Mull, Eigg and Rum. Katabatic winds threatened to blow us off our bikes through Kinlochewe and Gairloch, and near Ullapool the road was closed by a landslide.

The last day took us to Durness. With the wind beating us, there was no chance of being ferried across the Kyle and riding to Cape Wrath. But we were thrilled to finish our journey.



Lizard Point signpost. Less photographed than Land's End's!



The Chilterns: rolling hills and some shade from the July sun



End of the road at Tunstall, Holderness. Erosion is 1-2m a year



The North A tour de Yorkshire

Rick Elliott cycled 500 miles around 'God's own county'

OKAY, I HAD passed a 'Road closed' sign but it did say underneath: 'Passable for cyclists'. Half a mile further on, the road literally went off a cliff! I looked down at the result of coastal erosion, and pondered the long detour I'd have to make.

It had been going so well: the train to Hull, then a visit to the lonely Spurn Point. It was the start of a cycle ride roughly following the Yorkshire boundary, using the most picturesque routes. The views were magnificent, all the way north to Whitby and over the North York Moors.

Next came the Yorkshire Dales, passing Tan Hill, the highest pub in England, and Garsdale Head. Three long climbs led me through Kingdale and into the Forest of Bowland.

The High Pennines section through Trawden, Hebden Bridge and Holmfirth featured hills that are short, steep and relentless. My route touched the outskirts of Sheffield before climbing into the Peak District, with beautiful views over the Derwent Valley.

The eighth and final day was a fast 90 miles through the Isle of Axholme to Goole, the largest inland port in the country, and Howden with its lovely minster. From there, the TransPennine Trail took me to Hull for my train home.

South West England

Mercury rising

*A heatwave lay heavy on **Bob Forster's** tour of Oxfordshire, Wiltshire, and Gloucestershire*

There's no accounting for the weather. July should have been perfect: summertime, and the living is easy. My annual tour had everything going for it. What could be better?

Day one was continuous rain. No let up. I rode south from Oxford, damp yet cheerful as there's not much that can get through a cape. But this was not going according to plan.

The sun, so they say, shines on the righteous, as well as on cycle tourists. Next day Great Missenden was bathed in warmth. Across the Chilterns, Henley oozed class. I sat on the river bank, pint of milk on one side, innertube inflated on the other, just making sure that puncture was

mended. I was wreathed in smug content.

And so it continued, on to Salisbury, Stonehenge, and Cirencester on successive days. Each day warmed further. No problem – every rider knows that we make our own breeze as we ride onwards. But by now, the temperatures were serious. Sun cream was smothered on ripening flesh.

Stonehenge to Cirencester was mercifully flat but mercilessly hot. At Avebury stone circle, the ice creams stood no chance at all in temperatures edging into the mid-thirties. The final day of my tour broke all records. Some distance away, Cambridge recorded 38.7° centigrade. Oxford was not far behind, a phrase that sounds familiar from the boat race commentary.

All of a sudden, the heat caught up with me. No more cockiness. After resting, I could barely get my leg over the bike. Home was a tepid bath and glass after glass of cordial. Then my wife placed me gently into the recovery position: stretched on the armchair with tea to drink and, just a fingertip away, a man-sized slab of cake. I would live to pedal another day.



Temperatures edged into the mid-thirties



More online

Fancy contributing to *Cycle*?
Read the guidelines here:

cyclinguk.org/be-part-cycle-magazine