

# Holyhead to Chester

## Or A Tale of Two Castles (with a small selection of photos)

The shot was perfectly lined up. As the train approaches, she should be able to take a picture in the evening sun with her bike leaning strategically against a station pillar. A train could be heard pulling into the station. Panicked, she looked up and down the track – was she in the wrong place? Facing the wrong direction? But no, it was a Liverpool train pulling into the end of platform 3b. She continued to hover, camera turned on, standing in the planned place to get the best shot. As the smart Virgin train approached around the distant bend, a catastrophe unfurled. The Liverpool train was discarding its passengers and the nearer the train came, the more passengers and bags swarmed around her, enveloping her, the bike, the platform. The train pulled in, passing her now and taking with it the desired image.



The next morning dawned with blue sky, sunshine, several chickens and a goat (Arthur). Breakfast was thankfully in a separate room to the thirty schoolchildren who had run amok the previous evening, and prompt enough to allow the two adventurers to leave shortly before nine. A descent from the Valley of the Rocks showed views of Holyhead, its Ferry port and the impossibly tall chimney of Anglesey Aluminium.



At the ferry terminal and after a few mandatory start-of-the-ride photos, our hero's set off along National Cycle route number 5, which promised to take them home to Chester by tomorrow. It set off immediately up a hill with speed bumps and seagulls, before negotiating a woodland track to the RSPB reserve by the bridge onto Holy Island. When the first puncture had been fixed, our intrepid riders waved goodbye to the president and crossed the bridge, before turning left and following the rolling undulations to cross Anglesey. The views consisted of the distant sea, sheep, cows and horses in abundance, windmills, flowers and



churches. The best view was on a steep narrow descent, where the Menai Bridge could be glimpsed.



Three hours behind planned schedule and route 5 took an impossible route round and up Bangor until the ladies were completely lost. Asking in a sweetie shop the shopkeeper tried her best to describe an equally impossible route to the Weatherspoons pub on the High street. After even more hills, up then down, and a number of one way streets (Bangor is all one way - and it is the other way) the desired location was discovered, and a relieved Roy welcomed the ladies with a much deserved drink. The ladies also welcomed the local bike shop who was able to supply a new tyre and tube to a beleaguered back wheel.



Roy negotiated an interesting and devious route that was the 'CTC version of Route 5'. It took in a fabulous twisty lane high above the main A55, and included a sneaky traverse of the new bridges a Pen-Y-Clip – at that time not yet open to the public. Arriving into Conwy along a winding path



alongside the river, until the castle came into view, was agreed to be better than the re-directed route 5 along the main road. Goodbyes and more photos followed before locating beds for the night.



The next day dawned grey and grim, and by the time the ladies were ready to leave it was also raining. Grrreat. Route 5 led them out of Conwy over the bridge and then through to Llandudno Junction. Just before the main road, Pabo Lane to the left turned out to be another small twisty lane overlooking the A55. A slight deviation through a camping field and farm brought the cyclists into Rhos when the promenade would be the route for the next stage. The wind by now had picked up into a gusty menace and was in their faces as they headed toward Colwyn Bay. However, as they rounded the bay the wind became more of a tail wind and less of a threat and they arrived at the pier in time to meet the other local riders who would accompany them on the next leg.





The next ten miles followed the sea front with its caravans, amusements and unspoiled beach views. An unfortunate skid brought off a couple on a tandem, so a little time was spent patching and arranging for their safe return home. By now the ladies had met another chaperone – Dave – and he joined in with refreshments and route navigating.



As Route 5 turned inland, so did the three riders. However, the route also ascended rather sneakily, and with greying skies and time ticking, it was decided to head for Aberkhan with the promise of cake – which had not been fulfilled at Talacre.



Ploughing on, there was a brief stop at Flint Castle before the heavens truly opened! There are few places that can match Flint at 5pm rush-hour in the driving rain! The President again tore himself away from his comfy sofa and met the riders in Connahs quay, for the final burst to Chester. But wait – who is this familiar figure on the horizon of the Sealand road bridge – bobble Tam-O-Shanter and pedal pushers can only mean one person – Harry! A quick chat-and-catch-up and photo before he was left to continue home, and now only the president accompanying our original rider was left.



107 miles from Holyhead to Chester, not strictly following route 5, but in that general direction. Many thanks to all who made it out to meet us and ride with us!

