

Friday excursion to Barmouth on the David Ackerley route

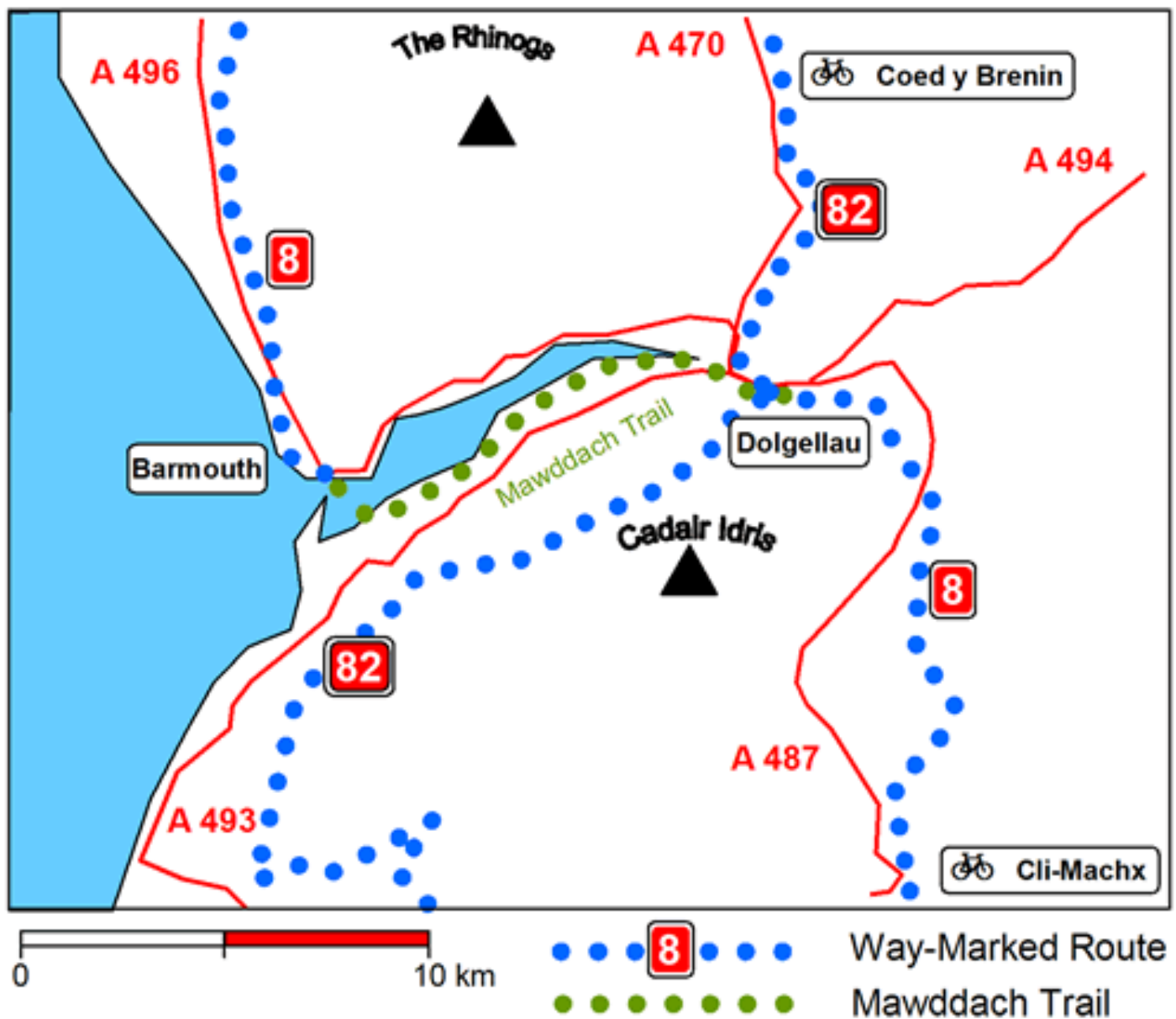
Bala to Barmouth - 6th September 2019

The weather forecast was not promising so I was not surprised that only four of us made the trip to **Bala** for what I had promised would be a challenging ride. **Brian L** and **I** were on **e-bikes**. My cousin **Richard H** from **Sheffield** and **Janet G** were the only ones powering themselves. The wind and rain were light during the first five miles along the lake, but once the ascent started it was a different matter. I tried to cheer others by pointing out it wasn't actually rain, but low cloud. They weren't impressed. The vegetation thinned as we got higher, and soon we were in what was probably open moorland with beautiful views, had we been able to see them. The wind grew stronger and we were all glad to reach the summit and enjoy a magnificent descent with the visibility improving. By midday there were even glimpses of yellow light in the sky!



Dolgellau was very welcome and we were soon enjoying a hot lunch.(this was supposed to be a mid morning coffee stop). The café served excellent and varied food at a very reasonable price, but the waitress seemed to have escaped from a sitcom. She took orders carefully and in a predetermined order. Suggesting you would like tea before she had written down the unasked question about what colour bread you wanted got you a withering look. She certainly wasn't going to try and make you welcome and gave the impression it had been many years since she smiled.

We discussed the new condition recently diagnosed by psychiatrists as “Range Anxiety”. It’s primarily found in owners of electric cars, but appears to be also found in cyclists with e-bikes.



The Mawddach Trail (above) runs along the river from Dolgellau to Barmouth. The aforementioned condition resulted in this being ridden at a steady 10mph, did I mention also the headwind? The trail is a beautiful, flat, car free route, ending in the long viaduct/bridge across to Barmouth where we enjoyed coffee and cake and pondered our return journey whilst enjoying the view over the harbour and estuary. We were an hour behind schedule now.

Brian and Janet decided to use the trail to return to Dolgellau whilst Richard and I took the scenic but hilly route passed the Cregellan lakes. The wind was now helping a little although this was the steepest climb of the day. The lakes and views back to Barmouth were stunning though.

Soon we were passing through **Dolgellau** again and onto the big climb out of it. We were reunited briefly with the other two and **Brian** shared some welcome **Jelly Babies** from a huge bag.

Shortly after this things started going to pieces from a navigational perspective. **Janet** and **Brian** missed a turn and I called after them to let them know. **Richard** arrived at the turn, didn't see any of us so continued. I waited for a while then went back down the hill to look for him! Meanwhile **Brian** and **Janet** went wrong at the next junction. Eventually I caught up with **Richard**, but the others were not seen again. **Richard** and **I** got to **Bala** at 6:45pm and the others tell me they were just a little later.

Then it was straight to the chip shop. No beer on this ride!

I certainly intend to ride this route again next year, in better weather! I don't think it will feature in next year's rides programme though! **John** was right to decline my offer to include it this year.

Text by Chris S

Here's a useless piece of info about Jelly Babies

*(The most noted modern manufacturer of **Jelly Babies**, Bassett's, now allocate individual **name**, shape, colour and flavour to different '**babies**': Brilliant (red; strawberry), Bubbles (yellow; lemon), **Baby** Bonny (pink; raspberry), Boofuls (green; lime), Bigheart (purple; blackcurrant) and Bumper (orange). (ed.)*