



Clockwise from above: The start at Morecambe. Checking the map by the River Lune. Crossroads at Keaden, with Ingleborough in background. The bike gets an admirer at Ouseburn village store. York Minster. Brimham Rocks. Old-style sign at Burnsall. South of Pen-y-ghent, near Settle

Fact File:
Riding into the past

Distance: 170 miles.

Route: Way of the Roses (Morecambe to Bridlington).

Conditions: Mix of sun, rain and wind.

Bike used: 1978 Claud Butler Jubilee.

Maps/guides: Bartholomew paper maps (not useful); Ordnance Survey Landranger maps (useful).

I'm glad I had... Expandable saddlebag; rain cape; enough cash.

Next time I would... Carry on after Bridlington for the four miles to Flamborough Head.

Further info: wayoftheroses.info; Cycling the Way of the Roses [Cicerone guide book]; e2e.bike (Rob's website).

In the 1970s, I don't remember ever booking accommodation; we just started looking out for a B&B about 5pm-ish, wherever we'd got to. We asked at tourist information centres, enquired in a pub or simply turned up at a youth hostel. If necessary we could always phone from a call box.

This approach would be more challenging today. Tourist information centres are either closed down or volunteer-run and seldom open, call boxes have been repurposed as mini-libraries or defibrillator stations, and everyone snaps up the best and cheapest places to stay on booking.com or Airbnb. So could spontaneity still work?

Surprisingly, it did – even though I couldn't use call boxes because the ones still with a phone in only take credit cards, which I didn't have. At Settle the cheery crew in the bike shop on the market square directed me to a guesthouse. At £80 that was too much for me but they'd also mentioned the youth hostel in Malham. Taking a punt, I rode on the few miles (albeit mostly vertical) to it and found to my delight they had dorm beds for a last-minute £15. Dynamic pricing, you see: last week they would have been £35.

Youth hostels have changed since the 1970s. Then, you had to stay outside in the rain until you were admitted at 5pm, bring your own sheet

sleeping bag, and do a task such as dust the piano. Alcohol was banned and if you arrived by car you had to pretend you hadn't. Now bedding is supplied, they have car parks, will flog you a bottle of house wine, and you can use the wi-fi all afternoon. And Malham YHA proved a sociable delight, just how I remember in common rooms of yore. A range of folk, old to young, all swapping stories... and nobody staring at a phone.

At Ripon, where I couldn't see any B&Bs despite riding around the town-edge roads, I asked in cafés about accommodation. I was directed to the Wetherspoon hotel in the square, which – like the previous night – had invitingly cheap last-minute rooms: £55. A dynamic-pricing bounty again! I celebrated the news with fish and chips plus a Stella. That seemed Seventies enough.

Pocklington would have been much pricier (I asked in the local library, where staff were very friendly and helpful). However, I'd worked

out a fix: the X46 (and some X47) York-to-Hull buses stop here and take bikes. Thanks to the current £2 flat fare scheme and yet more last-minute cheap dorm beds at York YHA (£15 again!), I could have done it cheaply. (As it happens I live in York, so I just got the bus home, then another back next morning.)



Malham, of Cove and Tarn fame