



Clockwise from top left: Hamlet statue in Stratford-upon-Avon. At least Holmfirth was all downhill from here... Another breather on Holme Moss. Grinton Lodge YHA. Heading towards Leyburn in the rain

is to calculate the climbing. Cycling the flat Bristol-to-Bath cycle path is very different from riding in the Peak District, and changes again factoring in camping gear. My limit was a maximum of 1,500ft a day, regardless of mileage.

However, advice is often ignored, often by the person giving it. For one unnecessarily arduous day of only 15 miles, but over 1,500ft of climbing, I blame another poet. Peter was shocked I'd be missing out Winnats Pass in the Peak District. I told him not to be ridiculous. I'd spent hours engaged in obsessive hill-reduction planning. Why would I include one of the UK's best-known climbs?

The next day, like a frayed-merino-clad Sisyphus, I pushed Bikey over the pass. I couldn't even turn round to enjoy the view in case I lost my grip and Bikey hurtled back downwards. Head bowed, I spied a furry caterpillar on the verge making slow progress. We shared a moment.

YOU DON'T GET THE UPS WITHOUT THE DOWNS

Entering the Yorkshire Dales and Pennines, I rotated sunscreen and waterproofs. The campsite near Leyburn was waterlogged so I cycled north to Grinton Lodge YHA. The scenery was outstanding, interspersed with military signs that ordered no stopping, and forbade going off road where army shooting practice boards were visible. At my speed, I would have barely been a moving target.

At the YHA I received an email cancelling my next gig at short notice. I phoned alternatives. No joy. So I

put a call out on social media and someone got in touch. Allie was part of what I now call the Angels of Barnard Castle. Between them, a pop-up gig and accommodation were arranged for the following day. All I had to do was get there.

My friend Brenda phoned. I'd first seen her teaching how to make your own tarp at the Cycle Touring Festival. She warned me against going over the Stang, which she'd struggled with on an e-bike. Komoot showed a kinder route further west. I set off in sunshine, popping into a bike shop to tell them about the gig, and in Reeth bought bread rolls for lunch.

I was slower than usual and wondered if my thyroid was making me tired. A few miles on, I checked the front brake. It was locking on, the wheel barely spinning. I got it working but then the same thing occurred, and I was about to ride into sparsely populated hills, with no phone signal. Feeling dejected, I reached a pub and asked for help. They let me phone the bike shop I'd passed, and a man gave me a lift in his 4x4. One of my water bottles emptied across the back. I was very apologetic.

The shop mechanic couldn't replace the brakes but made a temporary fix. Then I set off, along the same roads I'd cycled three hours before but now in heavy rain. At the turning, there wasn't a road but a gravel path. Going back meant the Stang but carrying onwards lead to Tan Hill, Britain's highest pub. I took the path most gravelly, which deteriorated into rocky, flooded potholes.

Apparently, there are two types of fun: type A and type B. I was having neither

Gig at Bromley House Library



100 Women in Cycling

I found out I was one of Cycling UK's #100WomenInCycling while rolling out my sleeping mat in a very cold sports' changing room in Bamburgh Pavilion. It was wonderful to be included among other women involved in genuinely meaningful endeavours such as leading community groups, campaigning, and promoting cycling. Naming 100 Women each year showcases the many different and marvellous ways cycling can be championed and celebrated in an inclusive way, and demonstrates there are styles of cycling activity to suit everyone. For more about #100WomenInCycling, visit cyclinguk.org/100women.