

# THE GREAT **BIKE RIDE** 2019

YORKSHIRE



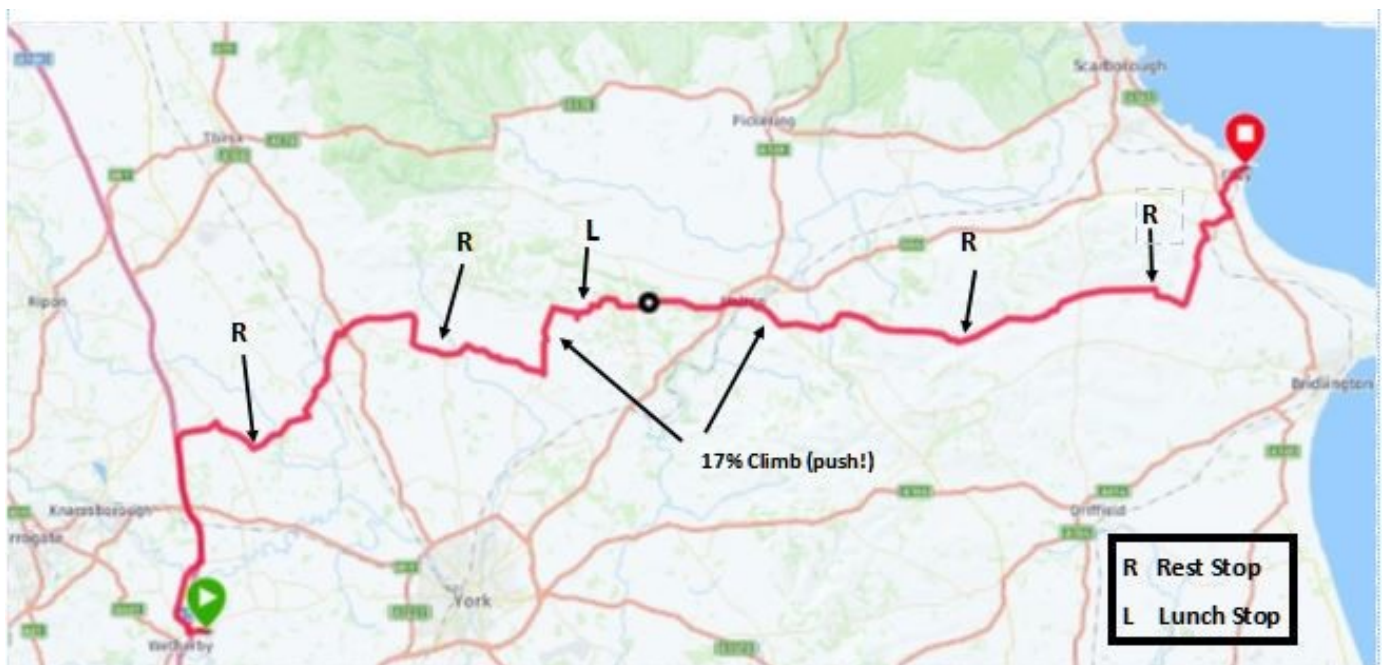
***Wetherby to Filey***

***June 15 2019***

# ***The Great Yorkshire Bike Ride***

***The Great Yorkshire Bike Ride is an annual 70 mile sponsored charity cycle ride from Wetherby to Filey. It takes in some of Yorkshire's best countryside through the Howardian Hills and the Wolds to the coast.***

***Every year approximately 2,000 cyclists of all ages and abilities take on the challenge of this great Yorkshire event and it has proved to be one of the most popular, successful and highly regarded rides in the country. The ride takes in a fantastic route across the best of Yorkshire to the coast at Filey Brigg. The event offers full support and medical services with four drink-stops and lunch at the half way point. 2019 marks the 36th year for the GYBR.***



## ***Summer 2018***

During our stay in England in June and July of last year, I took a two-day bike ride from the flat in Ilkley to the seaside town of Morecambe – and back. I chose two days when the weather forecast was for an extended warm and dry spell and, as it turned out, cycled on the two hottest days of the summer. Temperatures soared into the low eighties (very unusual for northern England) and, together with the high humidity, cycling the hills of Yorkshire and Lancashire was a considerable challenge. However, I made the goal in both directions, although my time for the 62 miles was about eight hours for both directions.



Meanwhile, only ten days earlier, on a far cooler and cloudy day, Robert and his son Oliver (then 13) had successfully completed the 70-mile sponsored charity ride from Wetherby to Filey – the Great Yorkshire Bike Ride.

**THE GREAT  
BIKE  
RIDE  
2018** YORKSHIRE

This ride is “for all ages and abilities” and the sponsors provide drink and lunch stops as well as medical and mechanical support along the route as well as return transportation if required. It has been an annual event for 35 years and Robert has participated several times.

So, in ensuing discussions about our respective “triumphs”, it evolved that perhaps Robert and I could do the GYBR together in 2019. Neither one of us remembers exactly how the “deal” was set, or indeed if anything was agreed to, and we promptly forgot about it. It was, after all, a year away.....

## ***Spring 2019***

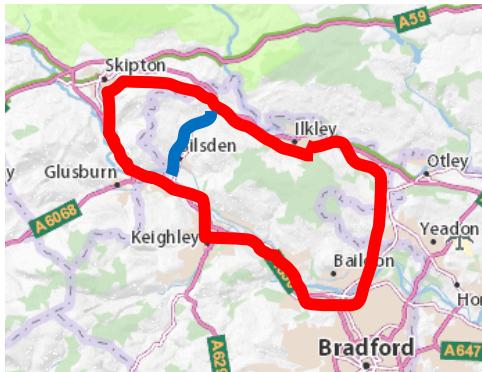
In mid-April I received an e-mail from Robert telling me that he was “up for the Great Yorkshire” if I was, and registration was now open. Clearly one of us had remembered! The somewhat casual, over a drink, conversation of last summer was resurrected but now had more immediacy and, it seemed, had the feel of a challenge. Obviously, it would be difficult for me to simply ignore it so I promised to register and join Robert on June 15. At this time in the year I had amassed a total of 18 miles in the saddle this cycling season - but I still had two months to get in shape!





Over the next month (still in Ohio) I got out several more times and accumulated an additional 135 miles; no single ride greater than 28 miles, however, and all on the relatively flat terrain around home. A little over 150 miles didn't seem like much to prepare for a 70-mile ride but by late May it was time to leave for England – with the hope of testing legs and lungs in the Yorkshire Dales.

We arrived in Ilkley on the morning of May 21 and, with the necessary unpacking and shopping completed, I checked my bike over in readiness for any decent day for a ride. That happened the very next day when the forecast called for a dry but cool day with a brisk westerly wind; one that wasn't perfect but certainly good enough for an initial ride in Yorkshire. In fact, even in late May, a day like this should be regarded as a bonus and to miss the chance for a ride would be a shame, especially when there's an important goal not too far away.



I chose to do one of my favorite rides from Ilkley; one that I call "Round The mountain". It's a 30- or 40-mile circuit around Ilkley Moor that includes almost 20 miles of relatively flat roads together with three or four climbs that are not "pushers" but nevertheless test my abilities, especially on a first day out such as this.

As on every run from the apartment where we stay, the first mile or more is downhill before reaching the main road through town. Even then, there are several more miles heading east that are an easy ride leading to a gentle rise before a steep descent into the busy town of Shipley. If Shipley is successfully negotiated, with its gradual climb and heavy traffic, the reward is about 15 miles of undulating countryside with beautiful views across the Aire Valley. The route follows the "old road" (that I remember from my childhood) and much of the heavy traffic is diverted along a motorway-style route that bypasses the town centers along the way.

For the 30-mile ride, I would climb from Silsden for a steep mile before coasting almost all the way back to Ilkley. For the 40-mile ride that I chose today, I take six more miles of "flat" road to Skipton, after which I must climb for about 3 ½ miles before an equally long downhill stretch to Ilkley. Either way, when I reach town, I still need to get up the hill to the flat. I could, of course, choose shortest route but over the years I have found alternatives that are a bit longer but significantly less steep, so I can ride, rather than push, into Brodrick Drive. It must be said, however, that no matter which route I take to get back to the flat, I always find that this final climb is very hard on the legs and, by the time I have put the bike away and staggered into the flat, all I want is to sit! So, after this first ride in England, there's still a way to go – and only three weeks to get there.

The first of those remaining weeks included time spent entertaining friends from America and several days of cool, wet weather. Hence, no cycling. However, beginning just two weeks before the event, opportunities for rides became more frequent and I made six outings for another 183 miles, bringing my season total to a little under 400 miles. The longest of these training rides was 41 miles but the best one – and the one that gave me just a tad more confidence – was one of 35 miles on flat ground between Bradford and Skipton. In order to do this, I loaded the bike in the car, drove to Skipton and

then did a round trip to the outskirts of Bradford and back. There were no significant grades which allowed me to cover the distance at an average speed of 12 MPH, as opposed to the more usual 10 or less. Perhaps if the GYBR were indeed as flat as billed, this ride could be a better simulation (albeit only half the distance) and gave me hope.

I was still not sure that 70 miles at “one sitting” was in my future but Robert was equally adamant that it was. We had dinner with he and Joanne on the Sunday before the event and he cited his previous entries and that of his 13-year-old son in 2018 as evidence that “anyone can do it”. He also assured me that the weather would be good for the ride with bright skies, no rain and a favorable wind when we needed it. His reading of the forecast differed considerably from the one I was following daily.

My “Weatherbug” app showed rain for several days and a somewhat better day to follow. Unfortunately, the period of rain – and hence the better day – kept moving back each time the forecast was updated such that the improvement would come a day after the event! I certainly wanted to believe Robert’s version and to share his overall optimism, but I wasn’t convinced.



I made my final pre-event ride on Monday, June 10, five days before the Great Yorkshire Bike Ride itself. Part of this was because all the



best books tell you to take a rest from training immediately prior to the event but it was more because my Weatherbug was proving to have been correct. Even the local nightly TV news suggested that it might be Sunday before the rain and strong winds moved away and Saturday remained in the doubtful column. There was nothing that we could do but wait and hope.



I was becoming more convinced that I would be a drag on Robert and insisted at every opportunity that he go at his own pace and not worry that I would be bringing up the rear. Just so long as my return transport was available – if, indeed, I reached Filey on Saturday. I used the non-cycling days to get the bike ready – chain and derailleur oiled, tires pumped up, lights and computer working – and watched the rain for any sign that there was a change imminent.

There didn’t seem to be.....

## *Saturday June 15*

I woke up at 5am and it was fully light. That's not unusual at this latitude in mid-June (twilight starts around 3am) but this light was a little stronger than any we had seen for the previous few days and it wasn't softened by raindrops. IT WAS A FINE MORNING. Even an hour later, after a little more fitful sleep, it was still bright, and a hazy sun was breaking through and above the mist of the Wharf Valley. It was cool (low fifties on the outdoor thermometer in the kitchen) but it wasn't raining and, at least for now, the wind wasn't moving the large trees significantly. Too soon to say that my prayers had been answered – but my worst fears were definitely allayed. Time to get up.

Molly had said that she would get up with me and prepare breakfast before I left and she was good to her word, even though her day would not start for several more hours. I enjoyed my cereal and bacon sandwich with a hot cup of tea and dressed for what would probably be a cool ride. I wore shorts and a pair of long cycling pants as well as two cycling jerseys, knowing that I could peel off a layer if necessary. I even had two pairs of gloves. I double-checked the contents of my saddle bag (which included a rain jacket!) and left the flat to drive the 15 miles to Robert and Joanne's home.



The plan was for me to arrive there at 7:30 so that two bikes could be loaded on Robert's SUV in time for the short drive to the start at Wetherby racecourse. Joanne would then drive the car back home, make several more runs to support kids' activities, and sometime around noon would leave for Ilkley where she would pick up Molly. From there, the two of them (and William, the youngest son) would drive to Filey in time to cheer us on as we triumphantly rode across the finish line. But we are getting ahead of ourselves.

We arrived at a very crowded Wetherby racecourse before 8am and, to our surprise, had already passed dozens of cyclists heading towards the destination. The GYBR information had said that the earliest start would be at 7:45 but clearly there had been a change in plan. Was this to "get ahead" of inclement weather or a necessary move to accommodate an inordinately large number of participants? We would find out soon if it were the former, but to my eyes, there were indeed a very large number of people on bikes raring to go.

As Robert unloaded the bikes and Joanne prepared to drive back home, I noticed that – despite my meticulous preparation – my two pairs of gloves had gone absent. Apparently, I had left them in the back of my car in Dunkeswick. The thought of cycling for eight or more hours without gloves was not at all pleasant and the prospect for a possible finish based on the brightening skies was immediately replaced with one of concern. Fortunately, Robert had a spare pair of winter cycling gloves in his vehicle and he was adamant that I should take them. He was wearing his fingerless cycling gloves, which seemed to fit with his choice of shorts, rather than long pants. Clearly the Yorkshire in him was show-



ing and I looked decidedly overdressed in my gear.

Now ready to go – and, indeed, for the first time I really did feel ready – we got in line for the start. Groups of about 25 were released every three minutes to avoid too much bunching up at the start, so we had perhaps a twenty-minute wait in the crowd lining up for the start. Each group was given its pre-ride instructions (“no more than two abreast, no groups larger than six, obey all traffic signs, watch for marshals at every turn, take care .....and good luck”) but since this was broadcast over a loudspeaker, we heard it a dozen times and were word-perfect by the time our turn came to pass the start line as the rope was lifted.



We're off – and on our 70-mile journey to the seaside at Filey. Our group of two dozen or so soon spread out and by the time we made our first left turn out of the racecourse Robert and I were well back – but not last. We crossed under the A1(M) motorway heading west, with a stiff breeze hitting our left-hand side, but soon turned north on the A168, the “Old A1”.

It is difficult to imagine now that this two-lane road was once the major artery between London and Edinburgh: The Great North Road. We were running parallel to its new big sister and its non-stop traffic to our right, although it was only a few miles before we crossed it again to follow the east side.



Now heading more or less due north, we had a following wind (after days of changing predictions as to its direction, the forecast had now settled on south winds for our entire route) and we were traveling comfortably at a reasonable speed. After following another couple for a while, Robert suggested overtaking them – which we did. One small success; but it was also obvious that we too were being passed, by members of the group(s) behind us. Still, we weren't in this to set any records ("It's a RIDE, not a "RACE") and our only objective was to go the whole way. It was beginning to feel as though this was a realistic goal, but we had covered less than 5% so far.

Somewhat surprisingly, even at this early stage, we saw a few cyclists stopped at the side of the road, apparently examining their bikes (surely not taking a rest so soon?) None needed any assistance, but it seemed odd that mechanical problems should occur so soon after the start. However, our complacency (!) was interrupted by a mild curse from my partner and a rather sudden application of his brakes. He was riding slightly behind me at the time, so I had no sense of his problem but as we pulled off the road, I was informed that his handlebar mirror had fallen off. His trot back up the road revealed that it was now a cracked piece of glass and would have to be replaced – sometime.



After ten miles of fast cycling (all adjectives used here are relative terms), we turned in an easterly direction and then southeast, so we lost our wind advantage for a while. Three miles later, and only an hour into the ride, I was surprised to see marshals indicating our first rest stop in the lovely village of Great Ouseburn (or was it Morton-cum-Grafton?) I recalled that Robert had said that in his earlier rides he had "flown by" the first two rest stops and, as I was feeling pretty good, I gave him a signal that I thought suggested bypassing this stop. Unfortunately, his interpretation was that I wanted to stop, so he left the road towards the drinks stand on the green.

I didn't notice his absence until he caught up with me again after, as he put it, doing several circuits of the village green and adding at least 20 miles to the ride. In addition, we had missed the chance of a bacon butty in addition to the drink and the rest! I am still not convinced on the butty but what I had forgotten was that he really needed the stop to make an adjustment to his handlebars. In mounting the bike on the car for the journey to the start, he had loosened the bars and had not re-aligned things perfectly before we set out. Consequently, his front wheel was a few degrees out of true, causing not only a little difficulty in steering but, as he put it, adding even more miles to his journey. We stopped outside the village and fixed the issue. I declined his invitation to retrace our steps and get a sandwich – but I have a feeling that I haven't heard the last of the missed bacon butty.

Shortly after the mechanical stop we came to a halt again as we waited our turn to cross a one-lane toll bridge over the River Ure. The Aldwark Bridge was built in 1772 by John Thomson who, before he built the bridge, ferried passengers in his rowing boat from one side of the river to the other. To keep



things moving in all weathers, Thomson decided to build a bridge. He had a special act of parliament passed so that if he built the bridge, he could collect a toll. This act is still in force – and the current owners collect 40P per car, saving motorists a 25-mile trip. Apparently, the organizers of the GYBR have an arrangement with the bridge owners that avoids each cyclist having to find his own toll, the only downside being the wait to cross in groups designated by the bridge master. One of our many instructions at the start had been to obey the bridge master when we reached this point!



We were now in beautiful Yorkshire countryside, with its narrow lanes, green farmland and immaculate villages, most of which boasted spectacular large homes of brick or sandstone. We were also traveling in a northeasterly direction again so had a favorable wind which helped us to push on quickly through Alne, Easingwold and Crayke to the next rest stop at Stillington. At Crayke we had entered the Howardian Hills, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty which is set aside for conservation and protected similarly to the National Parks. We would ride deeper into this area – and actually climb the Hills – in just a short while following our break.



We were marshalled to a grassy area filled with resting cyclists and strewn with bikes laid out on the grassy area of the village. Here we could get a drink and a banana (“One per rider, please”) and a chance to stretch out on the still damp ground. Robert took the opportunity to update Joanne on our progress and tried to locate her on his phone app – the same used by many parents to keep track of their teenage offspring. I don’t think he was successful at this point but at least she now knew where we were. He also filled me in on what to expect between here and our lunch stop, which was only about ten miles further, but which included the aforementioned climb up the Howardian Hills. Robert indicated that this had been a “pusher” for him last year and was one of two 17% grades on the route. I recalled that when I had done my “Ride of a Lifetime” across Britain, the first hill that had beaten me

was a 20% grade and I used the “One in Five” criterion subsequently as a measure of my ability to make the grade in saddle. Obviously, the length of the climb plays a part also and, who knows, perhaps another 27 years on the body would affect the outcome. Nevertheless, I was keen to meet the challenge which, as Robert described, could be seen for miles before the actual climb. I was also made aware that many cyclists dismounted for at least part of this climb so, no matter what, I would have company on or off the bike.



## *Official Rest Stop Number 2; Our First*

Leaving our rest stop in anticipation of the climb, we first followed a gently undulating road to the east, once more in along a tree-lined route with occasional panorama views across rolling hills. No sign at first of the hill itself and I was beginning to wonder whether Robert had been trying to fake me out with his pronouncement that it could be seen for miles before the ascent. In case it has not yet become apparent, my niece's husband has a keen sense of humor which at times might appear to have a slightly malicious bent, although in fairness, as they say, it takes one to know one. Had he been exaggerating the difficulty of the road ahead and was he about to kick into high (low) gear and pull away, leaving me to push my way to the Howardian Hills?

No, he was right! The ridge that had been visible for some time and clearly defined our ultimate destination suddenly had a thin ribbon of asphalt drawn on its “vertical” face. It was still a little way off



in the distance, but it was clear that the run up to it would provide no opportunity for picking up a head of steam; the narrow, straight road rose directly from our current level. It didn't look to be too long, however, and many of our companions could be seen in the saddle well in the distance. Should we give it a try?



My attack on hills always seems to follow the same pattern: start with whatever the pre-hill terrain gives you (in this case, nothing) and then clang through the gears to the lowest position. This usually happens far too quickly and all too soon the bike has done all it can for me; now it's up to my lungs and legs to carry me the rest of the way – or

not. Following this same “tactic” here on the Terrington South Bank meant that I pulled ahead of Robert, so I then had no idea as to where, or whether, he dismounted. I could already see a few who had got off to push but a large majority were still in the saddle or standing on the pedals and making good progress. For a brief moment I had visions of making this first climb, but a glance up told me there was at least half of the grade to cover and my legs immediately called time.

So, Hill Number One had defeated me and I had to complete the climb on foot, pushing a now much heavier bike and breathing heavily. Soon, Robert came alongside looking fresh and fit – but also pushing his bike. So much for the extremely low gears of his hybrid bike; I suddenly didn't feel quite so bad. Five minutes of pushing brought us to a flatter section of road where most were climbing back on their bikes to crest the hill in the saddle. Ironically, the marshals (who throughout had been alert and encouraging) at the intersection immediately following the climb had no way of knowing who had pushed and who had ridden – so we all got a cheer and a “Well done”. Perhaps the intensity of our “Thanks” or the sincerity of our smiles gave them a clue.

The ignominy over for the time being, we now had a short, easy ride to the major stop of the day – lunch in Terrington. The village hall and the large grass field where we were to be fed were set back from the main road by about a hundred yards or so and here again hundreds of bikes were dropped on the ground





and hungry riders headed for the lunch tent.



## *Lunch in Terrington*

Here also, the planning that the organizers had put into the event, and the dedication of hundreds of volunteers, was abundantly evident. Inside the tent were long tables displaying sandwiches, crisps (chips), drinks and chocolate bars and we were invited to help ourselves to one from each selection. Immediately outside the tent was another stall with bowls of pasta (meat or vegetarian) to give us our starch for the rest of the ride. For no good reason, Robert's bowl was only half-filled causing further Yorkshire comments of disdain – only half in jest, I suspect.

We found a bench on which to sit and enjoy our meal, Robert finishing first, still muttering complaints and wondering how he could be expected to compete the ride on such meager rations. On the bright side, however, he was now able to get the location app functioning properly on his phone and could see that Joanne was already on her way to Ilkley to pick up Molly. At only a little after noon, this was significantly earlier than the planned 1:30 pick up so Joanne had taken Robert's earlier message as an indication of better than anticipated progress. This prompted me to ask about what we could expect from here on.

We were at the 35-mile mark by my GPS watch so we should be halfway to Filey. However, Robert had clocked more than 70 miles when he last took part, so he had us still short of the mid-point. Regardless of the exact percentage completed, what we had done prior to lunch was the "easy bit". From here we would have a good run down to Malton, the largest town in the area, after which we would begin the second major climb. I asked how this would compare with the one already "conquered" and was not particularly encouraged by the answer. It would be similar in gradient but much longer and would al-

most certainly require a significant period of pushing. On the other hand, our reward would be a long stretch through a beautiful valley of the Yorkshire Wolds. “We’ll eventually have to climb out of the valley, of course, but that’s not a pusher; stay in the saddle and keep pedaling hard!”

So, I might feel alright now (and I did) but the real test was still to come. To my surprise I was actually enjoying the ride and beginning to feel that Filey was achievable but, clearly, it was too soon to check the “completed” box. We had both had some thigh aches in the first half and Robert in particular had suffered on some of the early climbs, to the point where he had stopped to give himself a massage. But then he had climbed back on the bike and was soon out of my sight and he now said that he was feeling much better. I did wonder if he had feigned trouble in order to hang back with me but that surely must be my suspicious mind at work again; he certainly had appeared to be in pain a while back. All’s well now, however, and we have had good lunch – so on we go to Malton.

It was indeed an easy ride into the market town of Malton, by far the largest settlement on our route and dubbed “Yorkshire’s Food Capital”. I thought that this perhaps referred to its central location in a large crop production area but later found out that it has a reputation for good restaurants and many food/drink events throughout the year. The town (or at least its neighbor across the River Derwent) is home to a large pork processing plant so this, too, must contribute to its title.



***Saw the sign but not the market***



Although the organizers had stated that there were no road works on our route this year, Malton Council must have had a last-minute idea and decided to dig up one half of the main road through town. It



was a section of less than 100 yards but when combined with the half a dozen sets of traffic lights, a series of left and right turns, and heavy Saturday afternoon car and foot traffic, the town was very congested. A number of cyclists, Robert included, dismounted and push along the pavement and actually made better time than those of us who chose to stick with the road. I, for one, enjoyed the periods of rest waiting for the lights to change as well as time spent admiring the local scenery.

We eventually made it through the town and were soon out in the beautiful countryside once again – and headed for the major hill climb of the day. We had followed the main road out of town in a south-easterly direction but soon took a left to travel directly eastwards to the village of Settrington. There had been a few short ups and downs, but the village marked the beginning of a mile-long dog-leg climb, the steepest part being right at the knee. Again, my method of attacking hills had me pass Robert and “speed” ahead, dropping gears in rapid succession. As usual, the bike had soon done all it could, and the rest was up to me. I don’t think I made it to the dog leg before my old legs said, “no more”, and I practically fell from the saddle to begin the push.



I don’t have a picture of Settrington Hill (too busy!) but Simon Warren, writing in Cycling UK, posted this picture, together with the comment:

***Despite the 17% sign at the foot of Settrington it is not that hard with a predominant gradient between 10 and 13% and only two short steep ramps of 16% and 17%.***

He has written a book “Another 100 Greatest Climbs” I’m not sure I want to read it and certainly don’t want to attempt them!

Shortly after my defeat, along came Robert, also pushing, but at a much healthier pace than me, apparently with no pain in his legs. In fact, he looked back at me several times before asking if I was alright. When I answered (with a smile??) that I was, his response was “You don’t look it”. Suitably encouraged, I puffed and pushed the last half mile to the summit and watched as others did similarly or, in many cases, remained in the saddle. A passing rider summed up what must have been the feelings of most of the group when he said “Up to this point I was enjoying the day!” One middle-aged lady passed me, still on the bike although hardly out-pacing me, but at each peddle stroke she grunted, much like professional tennis players do with every stroke. I think many of us thought that she might need the waiting ambulance at the top of the hill but, in fact, she kept going and could soon be seen coasting contentedly down the other side.

***We are here!!***



### ***Elevation Profile for the Great Yorkshire Bike Ride***

And that’s what we all did eventually. Settrington Beacon, the highest point on our journey at 650 feet, signaled the beginning of the long valley ride across the Yorkshire Wolds that Robert had promised. It was about five miles of very easy riding and some fantastic scenery, to the site of our next rest stop on



the green at West Lutton, right outside the Three Tuns pub. There were soft drinks available here courtesy of the event, but Robert went to investigate the fare inside the pub. He wasn't gone long so I don't think he downed a pint, but he did reveal that there were bacon and sausage sandwiches available for £2 each. Again, if he did partake of these delicacies, he must have wolfed it down.



*Looks like a lone cyclist  
.... but there were many  
more here in West Lutton*



Either way, the time spent inside the pub must have piqued his interest (and his thirst) because he said that we were making sufficiently good time that, if we passed a pub on the approach to Filey, we should stop in “for a quick half”. The drink sounded good, but the suggestion that we were within striking distance of our target was even more enticing.

At this penultimate rest stop, Robert also checked Joanne's location on his phone app and we were surprised to see that the car was only about six miles north of our location, traveling on the main route A64 towards Filey. Obviously, she and Molly would arrive before us but it was beginning to look as though we wouldn't keep them waiting long, depending on exactly quick the half might be if we stopped.

It was now about 2:30 and the weather was still dry and breezy but, although we had seen a few ominous black clouds earlier, there had been no raindrops on our route. My GPS watch indicated that we had only about 16 miles to go (I was still banking on a total of 70) so another two hours, or less, in the saddle should see us in Filey. So, with the final rest stop only another six miles further on, we left the Three Tuns and continued along the valley surrounded by fields of crops, many newly harvested but some still green. The flat to gently down road took us quickly through the tiny hamlets of Helperthorpe, Weaverthorpe, Butterwick and Foxholes, until we reached Wold Newton, where we were marshalled up a short side road to the village school.

Again, bikes were dropped and weary legs trudged to the toilets and/or the school entrance, the latter being set out with cakes and tea or coffee. I thought that this was a nice touch – tea and cakes in the late afternoon – until I was asked for £2 per person! This was the first time that we had been charged

for snacks along the way (other than the sausage sandwich that Robert may or may not have enjoyed a few miles back) but presumably the money would be used wisely by the school or some other village need. Besides, the big slab of fruit cake was excellent!

Back on the road for our final miles to Filey, I soon realized where I had heard of Wold Newton. It was here, just outside the village, that the road normally followed by the GYBR was closed and we had been told at the start that marshals would direct us towards Burton Fleming. How significant a detour this would be was not divulged but at this stage of our journey, any additional miles were important and tripled in significance. Robert's thighs were beginning to bother him again and I feel sure the last thing he wanted was to take in more of the beautiful Yorkshire Wolds – but to Burton Fleming we went.

In effect, the detour took us about two miles further east on a flat road before we turned left and headed north on a road that later met up with the one we should have taken. As Robert had correctly told me way back at lunchtime, the idyllic ride along the bottom of the valley must come to an end and with a price to pay. In this case it was a three-mile climb; nothing as steep as Settrington but a steady rise until we were on the outskirts of Filey. Again, a passing cyclist summed it up perfectly as he chided his companion: "Someone told me at the Three Tuns that the rest of the route was dead flat!" On the plus side, we were now headed north so the strong southerly wind was right on our backs – insufficient to allow coasting but a definite aid on this final straight.

Robert was still obviously in some pain and fell behind as I somewhat ungraciously took advantage of my road bike. After waiting for him just before we reached the busy road leading to Filey town center, I asked if he needed a rest but he waved me on and we both picked up speed as the road had crested and we were heading down to the sea. I had visions of dipping my front wheel in the North Sea, as is the custom when a ride begins or ends at water, but I hadn't realized that the finish line for the GYBR was on Filey Brigg, a narrow spit of land about 75 feet above the rocky beach.

So, after a fast two miles during which we were directed round a number of roundabouts, the marshals now waved us to the right towards the finish line. I heard the marshal tell Robert ahead of me to go right and UP THE HILL towards the car park so we had to press the pedals one last time to reach the cliff top. It was only a hundred yards or so but, as Robert (and, I'm sure many others) said "They had to have one more, didn't they?"

Now we were on the flat of the Brigg and Robert soon spotted his car in the car park. Then I saw William on our left-hand side and finally Molly and Joanne. Molly was holding her phone and clearly attempting to get a photograph, but I guess we had not given her sufficient time to master the project. Joanne had been following our progress on her phone (using the same app that Robert had on his) but we apparently got ahead of the little blue dot and reached the FINISH prematurely. Pictures taken after crossing the line – and picking up our completion certificates – would commemorate the achievement.



***We made it!!***

73.66 miles was displayed on my GPS watch as we dismounted on Filey Brigg. The two-mile detour accounted for half of the excess over the advertised 70-mile ride, so Robert had been right; the organizers must round down! However, 70, 72 or 74 miles are significant distances on a bike and I, for one, felt good at finishing the course. It had been a very long time since I had last covered 70+ miles in one day (perhaps as far back as 1992 on my End to End) so I was very pleased and, after several weeks of wondering, pleasantly surprised.

I felt reasonably good physically, also. Not ready to immediately sign up for next year (nor, as so many participants seemed to be doing today, turning around and CYCLING BACK to Wetherby), but better than after many rides from Ilkley. Clearly, the 100 yards up the Brigg was not the killer that is Wells Road.



## ***MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.***

I should now say many thanks to Robert for inviting/persuading/threatening/shaming me into the Great Yorkshire Bike Ride and for providing good company along the way. Thanks, too, to Joanne for all her driving and for bringing Molly – who all along knew I would do it!

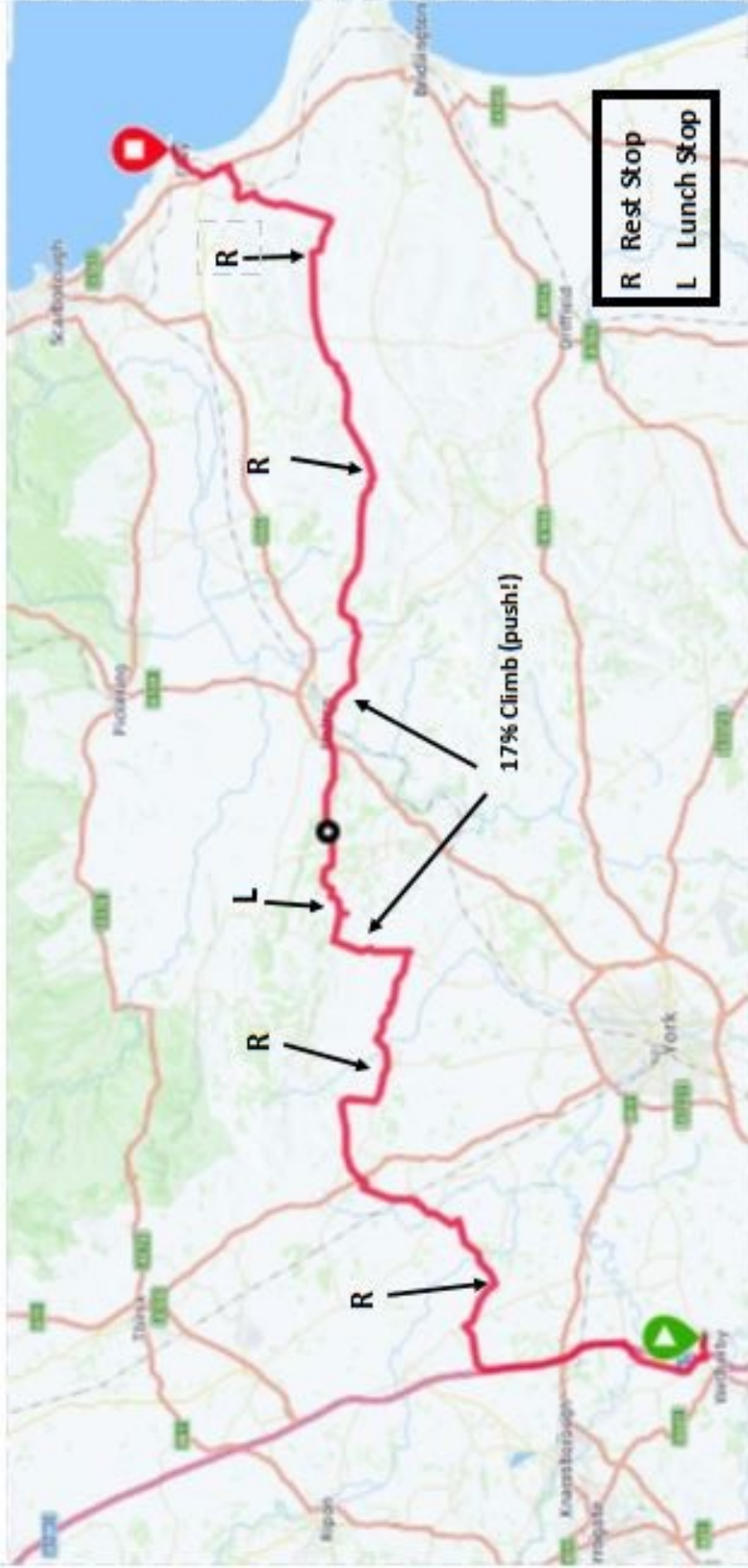


## ***FUNDRAISING***

As this was a charity event, I solicited donations from family and friends in England. Although the online system did not capture all of the giving, I can safely say that over £300 is headed to the eight charities who were selected by the organizers as recipients for 2019. Thanks to all who contributed.



## The Great Yorkshire Bike Ride 2019



1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Elapsed Time (Hours)

