

Long Distance Motorcycle Riding

A few months ago, I was reading through a magazine and came across an article relating to a long-distance motorcycle ride. The ride was called the Royal British Legion Ride and is run by a group called the Iron Butt Association. As most people who know me realise that I am always up for a new challenge on the bike, this got my attention.

After doing a little research I found out that the ride consisted of doing over 1000 miles within 24 hours. This ride is one of their 'Saddlesore 1000' rides. After about ten minutes thought, I decided that this was something I really should have a go at and duly signed up for it.

I had no problems knowing that the bike was up to the task, but the rider was an unknown quantity, bearing in mind that I had not done anywhere near this mileage before. I have been doing progressively longer rides over the past few months in an effort to get the muscle memory up to scratch and my body used to going 'tank to tank' on the bike.



Fast forward to February 16th 2019, a few days before the weather was looking favourable for a good ride to build up to the real thing. Then I had the idea that it would be good to have a go at it for real, a 1000+ mile practise, as you do. Things were hastily packed up on the bike and the route entered on two sat navs and a copy of the roads I would be taking inside the tank bag just in case.

The route I took was down to Manchester, across to Leeds, up to Edinburgh, onto Inverness then Wick. Once at Wick I doubled back down to Inverness and then across to Fort William, down through Glencoe and on to Glasgow, then home to Carlisle.

The start time is taken from your first fuel receipt and ends with your last receipt, in between this you must obtain a receipt at any main turn point. E.G. turning from the M6 onto the M62.

I decided to set off at 10.00pm on the Saturday night. I prefer to ride on boring motorways through the night for a couple of reasons, firstly they are quieter and secondly there are less distractions with things to look at in the dark, you are just counting the miles on your odometer.

The first part of the route down to Manchester was M6 all the way, this was really quiet and the miles flew in to the first fill up point at Birch services East on the M62. Onwards on the M62, this



is now smart motorway and I thought I was doing something wrong as almost all the vehicles were travelling in the third of the four lanes !!! Now I know I have not used much in the way of smart motorways, but even I could see there were no crosses in the overhead gantries, so what these people were up to is beyond me.

The next turn was onto the A1 for the long haul up country towards Edinburgh, a receipt for this turn was from Ferrybridge services. The A1 was a long drag with not a lot of traffic and up to the next receipt point at Berwick, I had a 20min rest and a couple of chocky bars to keep me going.

Up to Edinburgh and round the bypass to pick up the road to Perth, on the way crossing the new Forth bridge, which is very impressive when lit up at night. After Perth it is the dreaded A9 with its average speed cameras. This stretch of road to Inverness seems to go on forever and a day and compared to what I had done previously was tiring trying to watch the speedo and the road all at the same time, it's so easy in the car with cruise control.

I reached Inverness just as daylight was breaking and made another receipt stop for fuel. Then the fun could begin, the road up to Wick. For anyone who has not been up this way, it is a joy on the bike and even more so in the early hours of Sunday morning. The road was virtually empty and the bike and me had great fun round all the twisties and hairpin bends. I made it up to Wick within 12 hours and had a lovely breakfast in Tesco, 670 miles done, all going well.

After getting the receipt I headed back to Inverness, a little more traffic to play with and windier than when I came up. Another receipt from Inverness.

From Inverness I took the road down Loch Ness to Fort William. I was expecting rain at some point along this part, just not rain of biblical proportions, Noah would have been worrying at this point !!! I pulled in and let the worst of it pass over then made my way down to Fort William and my receipt stop. Onwards through Glencoe, by which point the rain had stopped and it was a case of picking off the tin tops full of sightseers as and when possible to make some progress down this stretch to Glasgow.

The twisty road down the side of Loch Lomond really held me up, there were umpteen lots of road works with traffic lights that seemed to hold for ages. Anyone who knows this bit of road will know filtering is not possible due to the narrow nature of the road and size of vehicles using it, just had to sit and grin and bear it. Onto Glasgow and the final stretch down the M74 and home.

I made it in 22 hours and 1 minute, 1027 miles. It was not an uncomfortable trip and the cycling shorts under my bike gear helped with the seating arrangements.

So, what did I learn from it? Well, quite a lot really. The main thing I would say that helped was the fact that I am an IAM RoadSmart Master Rider and National Observer, getting your view up and looking as far ahead really helped with planning the ride, especially when tiredness started to set in. Here are a list of other points:-

- If you are tired, STOP, get off the bike and take ten minutes to rest. I did not have to do this often but did not push on if I thought my concentration was compromised in any way.
- Drink plenty of water at fuel stops, helps keep the concentration up and stops the cramps.
- You will get pains in places you would think would be ok, hands and elbows mainly for me. Don't be a martyr, take some Ibuprofen or other pain killer.

- Always ride to the `SYSTEM`, even when you are a little weary: it just works!
- Get used to riding to a tank in one go without stops, less stops means more time riding.

So, it was a mammoth task for a first 'Saddlesore ride' but gave me great pleasure to know I could safely do it. Would I do it again, hell yes! I will be doing the charity sponsored one in June and you know what, I am actually looking forward to it.

If anyone would like to do it in June let me know and I will get some info to you.

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