

The Royal 106 by Ali Mills

So Emma persuaded me it was time to do 100 miles on the bike in preparation for the Dragon Ride in June (125 miles) ..arrgh. The royal wedding day seemed a good time and the weather had been glorious so we hoped it would stay.

A friend of ours with a Garmin thingy planned us a route, it had 4 lovely cafes on it which was most important! I was told it was flatter going out towards Padiham and round the Trough of Bowland.....

I went to Blazing Saddles and bought about 100 gels and energy bars (you never want to be short of such things) I studied the route and memorised the villages we were to go through. The bike fairy checked the bikes over (Emma) and I went to bed not too anxious. I deliberately didn't tell anyone as I didn't want any pressure, my adrenaline levels are too high at the best of times!

Got up at 7am, felt sick, eating porridge when you feel sick is a challenge! Weather was sunny but looked a little breezy. And off we went..... nice and steady, no rush, got all day blah blah blah still a 100 miles though.

Legs felt ok as we pedaled out to Padiham, still had the sick feeling and the words "100 miles" went round and round in my head. Only done 70 before, although it was hilly (tod loops) Went over the Nick of Pendle and into Waddington, 25 miles done and time to have a cup of tea and half a bacon sandwich, every cyclist was out enjoying the day off, lots of friendly chat at the lovely cafe. So a 1/4 done, 3/4 to go, what a long way!

Back on the bike to go straight up Waddington Fell-tough, fast down though:)

Mile 30-40 HELP! Legs failing, only done 30 miles, will never do 70 more, up, down, up, down...EMMA! Brainwave-saddle had been lowered slightly in a recent bike fit adjustment with Olli, thats why my quads



are shattered, stopped, raised the seat and started again, felt a bit better, had another gel.

Eventually felt like I was reducing the miles as we swooped along for another 10. Another energy bar consumed. And then the wind started, oh my god how soul destroying, head down, pedal pedal, 5mph, had to pull over, take a rest and a gel, the bikes were being blown backwards. I was running out of enthusiasm for this ride!

Then went through a village having a scarecrow festival-amazing life size characters.

Stopped for lunch at a pub, the largest plate of curly fries arrived with my baguette, tempting but not too many to be eaten with 40 miles still to go, too greasy.

And so Waddington Fell and the Nick of Pendle loomed again, they had haunted me all the way round. Logistical consumption of gels and milky ways fueled me up them, all be it slightly delirious with exhaustion! How on earth were my legs still going round?

The final ascent up towards Burnley was a killer, even Emma had forgotten the stinging little beast and it took all I had to get up it, I felt drunk at the top!

Back in Burnley, familiar ground, more gels and an eccles cake, bottle of coke for the last bit. Pedal, pedal, going to do it, going to do it, I could feel the elation creeping in, faster faster.....STOP, nosebleed at Cliviger!

Off we go again, bit shaky inside now, hang on a minute 2 miles from Todmorden and the speedo thing says I've done the 100! The actual route was 106 but Emma kept that to herself, she said I could get the train from Tod if I wanted to - as if!

Eventually got home, even managed Palace House Road (killer hills), collapsed off the bike onto the sofa-what a rush! Downed the recovery drink, felt a bit teary and smiled a lot.

Lessons learnt

1. check how hilly the route is (8500ft climb) before you start, I think this is a lot for a first 100!
2. go with someone you can rely on when its tough
3. You have to battle your mind as much as your body
4. You really can do it!

