

World Carfree Day 2015 – review

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As planned, I went out on my bike on World Carfree day... which, to be honest, doesn't really separate the day apart from any other for me. First I had a client to visit so I cycled there, sporting my World Carfree Day t-shirt (pictures below, but no skipping ahead).

I had made this myself a couple of weeks before – I put the artwork together on the computer and printed it off onto a t-shirt transfer sheet I already had, and my mum then helped me with the ironing (I would have done this myself but it was her iron and she's used to ironing things onto things, so she took over!)

After visiting my client I carried on my way... on my trip around the Isle of Anglesey where I live.

I suppose my t-shirt was both a personal acknowledgement of the day, and also a quiet protest at all the cars that are unnecessarily on the road. I don't think I'm overly critical of this, I wasn't upset with anyone for driving their car, I do own a car and drive occasionally, but I think more people could make an effort to leave the car at home and choose to walk or cycle, or combine or share journeys with others to reduce how many vehicles are on the road and how my pollution is caused – it's mostly routine "It's what you get used to," as I agreed with another cyclist I was speaking to recently. I'm not one for a "It's us against them," attitude either, but I do find myself observing other road users with a critical eye from time to time.

A particular thing I seem to experience more these days (which is perhaps due more to me cycling more often than I did some years back, rather than there being an increasing problem) is motorists overtaking me when really they shouldn't, such as when approaching a junction or speed bumps, only for them to then hold me up, or when I myself am doing close to the speed limit – it seems such motorists just see a bike and their brain then says "bike = must overtake" and they fail to observe what actual speeds are being done. Some ten miles into my journey and I was heading down a hill doing 30mph in a 30mph area (it's always a joy to match a speed limit or keep with the flow of traffic on a bicycle!) and I had a Porsche hanging off my tail, poised to pass me on a bend. I turned my head as a way of both acknowledging 'his' presence and to show my intent – I didn't want him passing me on the bend where I would need to lean in (do non-cycling car drivers think of this?), particularly because I know the bend well and there is a lot of loose gravel at the edge of the road, so I couldn't keep well over, not at that speed. Thankfully he stayed behind me and just promptly overtook me once we were round the bend at the bottom of the hill with my speed now reducing.

Next up was a 40mph downhill stretch and thanks to a tail wind I was up to speed here – great fun (41.9mph is still legal right?!!) No cars on my tail here to threaten a silly pass.

I stopped some miles later for a couple of sandwiches I had packed, and a cup of coffee from my flask, and I waved at a guy heading along the road on his mobility scooter – "Is that allowed on Carfree Day?" I wondered. I listened to the Jeremy Vine Radio 2 show on my phone and a story about government cuts threatening the closure of a foot bridge in another area of Wales that is used by pedestrians and cyclists – the closure would cause them a 15 mile detour... "Great news for World Carfree Day." I thought sarcastically. Saving the local government some £30K-£50K a year... "But at what cost to all the people who may choose to drive instead?" I wondered.

The rest was all plain sailing cycling. I cycled down to Beaumaris (another nice big hill leads down to there, but it's only nice going that way!), and I popped across the Thomas Telford Bridge, round the island on the Bangor side to then head back, but first I took a couple of shameless selfies... (to show you my t-shirt and the bridge)...



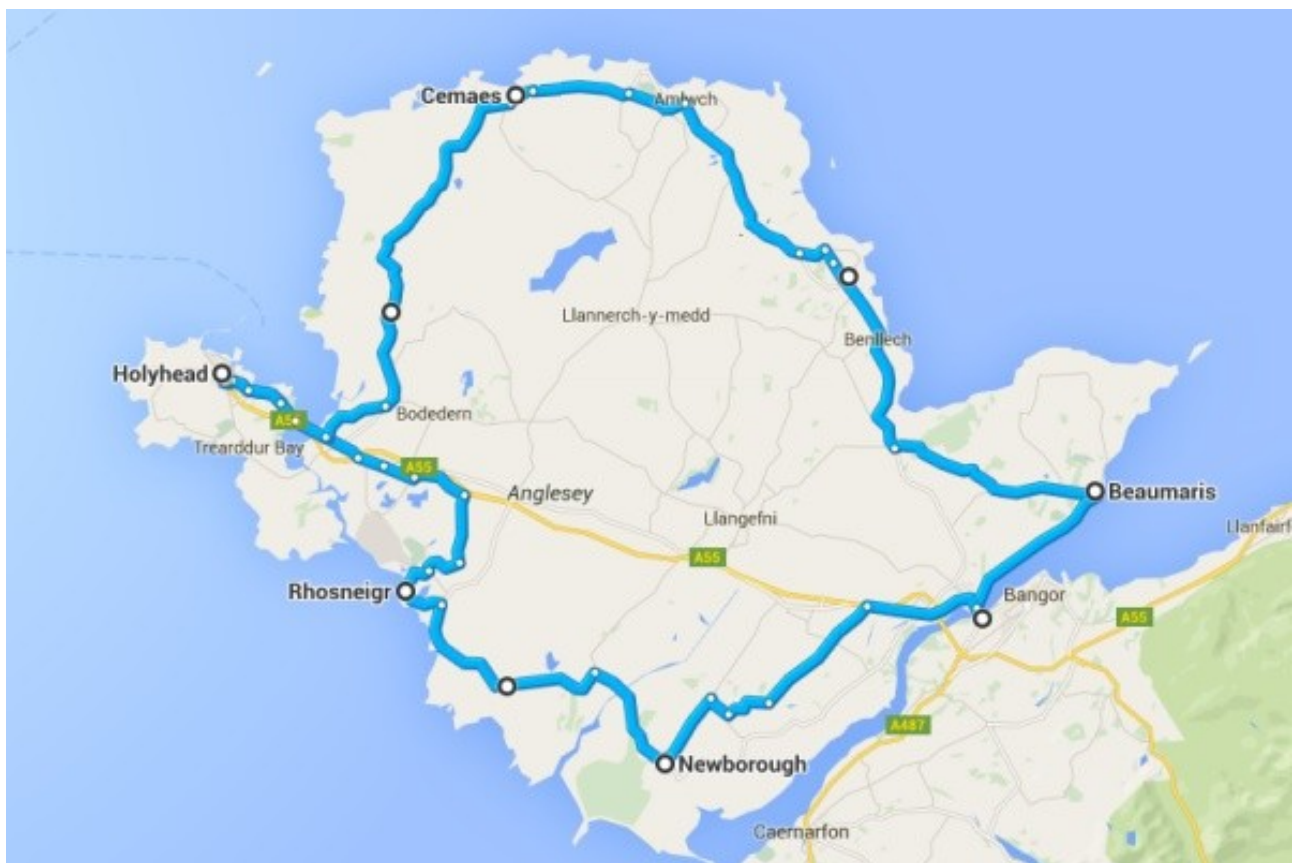
Then back on Anglesey I carried on across the A5 at Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogogoch *checks his spelling*, and through Newborough Forest where I stopped to consume the rest of my sandwiches and coffee, and where I saw a pair of red squirrels... here's a blurry one:



A little further along my route and I next had my critical eye on a fellow cyclist, rather than a motorist this time, who kindly swooped down off a side road ahead of me. I was a little thankful of having a bike in front of me, to give me a rest from the head wind, but every time he eased off his pedals he seemed to slow down quite considerably, and suddenly too, causing me to have to put on my breaks a few times within a short distance, and in the end I gave in and passed him.

Back to the A5 I headed into Holyhead, just for the sake of it, and was kindly met with a heavy downpour of rain. Within a few seconds I was soaked through – a great look for someone wearing a white t-shirt I'm sure! Oh well. I battled, round the round-about and then back the way I came, this time on the cycle path instead of the road this time, onwards until home, by which time I was pretty dry again.

An easy 80 miles perhaps?



Well, my leg muscles seem fine with this sort of thing these days (I've done the route before), but knees, forearms, hands and ankles, less so... but then I have already cycled a lot of miles this month compared to what I'm used to – more on this later.

The funny thing is, my legs felt fine today (the day after), just not 100% energy, but when I went out on my bike within 5 miles I'd broken the clip on my helmet when I took it off at a client's house (the clip has been cracked for months so I knew it was going to break completely sooner or later), and then a mile later I got a puncture (my rear Continental-branded tyre has been showing me a nice orange band for some time, which I thought I would ignore for as long as possible... i.e. until it let me/itself down!)