

Coast And Castles

An cycling odyssey from the Millennium bridge Newcastle to the Forth road bridge Edinburgh in October 2009.

written by Stanley Feerick

Chapter 1

It's all about the bike.

I'm not one to contradict the master but in this case - Lance you are wrong! Last spring whilst drifting along the country lanes with the Bury section I mentioned my plans to ride the Sustrans Coast & Castles. Like most saddle dreamt schemes it drifted off the agenda into the 'someday next year pile'. This year the Coast & Castles was heading for a repeat performance of apathy when on another section ride 'The Hood' happened to ask how my plans were coming along. I had to admit to very little progress other than once giving it a passing thought. He said he fancied the route and why don't I open it to the section. 'Good idea, leave it with me I'll sort it' I said. Tricky contortion that - arse on saddle, foot in mouth.

I had a mission that Tom Cruise would be scared to take on. In these hi tech days of interweb Astroturf and P-GPS and the like, you'd think a monkey could book his piano on a train let alone a bike. I 'Googled' rail network and quickly learnt that British Rail has passed away, to be replaced by a dog's breakfast of transpennine cross country virgins. I did learn however, that from "round 'ere" Leeds is the gateway to the East Coast but Edinburgh has a direct line to Bolton.

A few strokes of the keyboard finds a train ticket site. I type in Outward Rochdale to Newcastle--- Return Edinburgh to Bolton. When the price was displayed I had to check that I was on the rail web site not the private heliport. Try again, search for 'cheap train travel' I thought keep it simple--- one way Rochdale to Newcastle. Price came back £68 each, change at Leeds. Beggar that, I thought, we'll ride to Leeds. I type one way Leeds to Newcastle. £16 each came the answer.

Now geography isn't my strong suit, but Rochdale to Leeds is a lot less than Leeds to Newcastle. I type Rochdale to Leeds and £12 each came back. Arithmetic isn't my strong suit either but $16+12$ is not 68. Everyone knows buying in bulk is cheaper, so I try again. Rochdale to Newcastle. Still £68 each. I note these fascinating facts and move on.

Type Edinburgh to Bolton. £10 each came back. I won't be shocked, I just noted the price and moved on. Looking back, that bit was as slick as a Dura-Ace shifter compared to getting three bikes on the train. None of the ticket web sites have a 'how many bikes box' to tick - well you wouldn't expect that would you?

I ring that confusingly named 'HELP' line. It transpires that I would be buying tickets from three different rail companies so I need to arrange for cycle space from each at the appropriate time. They inform me which carrier did which route, but as different carriers use the same route at different times that was a fat lot of help. A mere hour's clicking found which train company would be used for each leg of the journey. So just get the cycles booked in then!

Losing the will to live I thought 'sort the Leeds Newcastle first, if necessary we can ride to Leeds.' I rang the appropriate 'help' line to be answered by an automatic human interface with a voice like Joanna Lumley in syrup. 'Hello I can help you with.....' and came out with a sickening list of drivel, non of which had any relevance to our chosen mode of transport. In frustration I yelled ' I just want to get three bloody bikes on your bloody train.' 'I did not get that' was the reply 'press 1 for this, 2 for that, 3 for the other, and 4 to speak to an adviser.'

I pressed 4. A delightful young lady, with a delightful 'Bollywood' accent said 'my name is Mary how can I help you today.' 'I'd like to arrange space for three cycles on the train from Leeds to Newcastle.' 'I do not understand you, what do you want?' 'I'd like to arrange space for three cycles on the train from Leeds to Newcastle.' 'You want to make the journey three times in cycle.' 'No, No, I'd like to arrange space for three cycles on the train from Leeds to Newcastle.' After three or four goes at it she gave me a new number to ring.

Bloody Joanna again 'Hello, I can help you with.....' I waited then pressed 4 again. Oh no it's Mary again 'how can help you today?' I said 'look, I am arranging a cycling trip. I just want to arrange to get our bikes on the train.' She said ' cycle... bike ... you mean bicycle, you want to take your bicycle on the train?' Full of hope 'yes, yes' I said. 'I cannot help you with that you must ring.....' Beggar that I thought, that's Joanna's number.

Think outside the box I thought. Back to the web. I found on the rail company site a link for group booking. I reasoned that group booking equals big money. Maybe, just maybe, big money would lead to someone who knows which way is up. A long shot I know, but I'm desperate now. Well it paid off, I got through to a chap who was spot on.

He told me I was on the wrong number, but before he went off I relayed my experience to date. I told him about Joanna, Mary from Bombay, cycles and geography and arithmetic. I even invited him to our house for Christmas dinner. He gave in, he told me there is a special department dedicated to helping (misleading) cyclists. Unfortunately they are not open at the moment (they only open Wednesdays at 13 o'clock on the eve of a full moon when there is an R in the month). He told me he could access their system and tell me what they would say if ever I got through to them. He said he could even reserve a booking on the system for me to confirm with them later. Cloak and dagger but hey, go with the flow. He was on a roll now. Showing off a bit he bragged he could even look at what other train companies would say – again, should I ever get through.

After ten minutes clicking and cursing he gave up on Rochdale to Leeds. He said 'look it just ain't going to happen. Leeds to Newcastle I can get two of you on the train' he boasted. 'There's three of us!' I exclaimed, 'hey this ain't my job' he said, 'ok ok you're really fab' I said 'just keep trying' I pleaded. A few more clicks and curses he came back and said, 'I think I can get two of you on one train and the other one on the next but...but you will probably get all three on the first train with two reservations.' This was looking like the best I was going to achieve, even this special agent on the inside could not actually make the reservation so what chance have I.

I waited for the full moon and made these half baked arrangements. Now these fabulous arrangements for the bikes are made (no force on earth is going to get me to change them) all I need to do is book tickets for us to match these bike reservations. If you are guessing, 'that's not going to be easy' I think you might be psychic.

Back to the computer to do battle. Remember I have two bikes reserved on one train and one bike reserved on the next train. I go to the site I originally found the better priced tickets; I look up Leeds to Newcastle, it's critical now that I book the right train because the cycle reservation is specific to one particular train. The price of tickets for the first train was £16 each but these tickets are also specific to one train; the ticket for the next train is £28 each. Now we might get all three bikes on the first train but we would not have three tickets, if I get three tickets for this train I might not get all three bikes on. I could buy an open ticket that would get you on any train but they cost £68 each.

Sherlock Holmes said "if you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth." Well as smart as he was you never saw him get a bike on the train did you. The solution is simple, well simple-ish. I book two tickets for the first train, one ticket for the second train and we just try to blag our way on to the first train with just two cycle reservations and two valid tickets.

Will we get away with it?!!! Read on.

Chapter 2 A Blow by Blow Account!

Day 1 Leeds to Newcastle by train, Newcastle to Amble by Sail

Derek, a willing volunteer, was conscripted to transport three riders and cycles to Leeds Central Station. Nigel Terry and myself pack into Derek's trusty Cleo, with three bike on the roof. Like the sails of a great yacht, we set sail to the east.

If you read part one of this 'epic' you may remember that despite best efforts we could not book our bikes on the train from Rochdale. As we tacked along the M62 no doubt the Pennine Express, with empty seats was making a parallel voyage. If we are serious about emissions carbon 'tyre prints' and the like we need to address this rail booking nonsense.

Arriving a good 55 minutes early we strolled across the station to study the departure board. Trains run to Newcastle about every half hour. 'Why not try to get an early train' was one suggestion? Now remember, we have two bike reservations and two tickets for the 10:05 and 1 bike reservation and 1 ticket for the 10:27. In true cavalier fashion we opt for the 3 of us getting on the 9:27

The three bikes fitted in a treat; we sat down quietly confident in our cunning plan. A mere half hour down the track, the ticket inspector loomed into view. The first two tickets were casually viewed and clipped, not so the third. 'This ticket is not for this train' she said, 'it's not even for this company, let me see the others again' she said. We were given the option pay full price (£68 each) or get off at York. York it was

then. Now logic would say, wait here for the train that the first two should have got on and take it from there. I decided to go to the ticket office to review our options. Big mistake. It transpires that our tickets are ONLY valid from Leeds, so getting on the train we would have caught in Leeds could still be a problem.

All for one and one for all, when the next train came in we got on and zoomed to Newcastle no problemo! Well nearly.

All this excitement plays havoc with the water works, these super new trains struggle to find space for cycles but have toilets big enough to take a tandem. At the press of a button a massive door sweeps open like something out of Star Trek. Going about my business (in standing position that is) mid-stream so to speak, WHOOSH the massive door zooms open. Whoops of laughter came from the audience outside, WHOOSH the door closed again. I completed the mission in hand and was straightening my attire when WHOOSH the bloody thing zoomed open again; I took a bow before it closed again. I pressed the open button and was met with great applause from the now cross legged audience.

I thought 'maybe I got away with it, my group might not have witnessed this débâcle.' No such luck, hoots of mirth met me when I returned to our carriage. I was consoled with the thought that 'it could be worse, you could have had one leg up on the sink and be applying chamois cream, be thankful for small mercies.'

From Newcastle Grand Central it's only a few hundred yards to the river and cycle way. Now Saturday 3rd of October was the date of the first gale of autumn. The wind direction was due east. We sped along the cycle way weaving between the Geordies as they braved the elements in their traditional short sleeved fashion, 15mph was achieved without resort to pedalling. The first 12 miles of the Coast and Castles ride, Route 1 is shared with routes 72 and 10. This cycleway is a triumph of ingenuity as it sweeps along the Tyne, through parkland, across housing estates and back to the river, 95% on glorious traffic free track.

At Tynemouth Priory we turn left and head north along a fiercely windswept North Sea coastline. Although battered by the cross winds we enjoyed the beauty of Whitley Bay, St Mary's Lighthouse, Blyth and Lynemouth as we traversed the mainly traffic-free tracks. Just north of Lynemouth we came across a strange group of 12 to 15 riders, a ragtag collection of ill-fitting bikes, helmets and clothes, led by two heroic cyclists. They were out of Newcastle that morning and heading for Amble, Berwick and beyond just as we were. We couldn't decide if it was care in the community or hug a hoodie on wheels. In any event they were a brave crew and we wished them well as we sped past. The hospitality of our first guesthouse was now beckoning us as strongly as that cutting westerly was impeding us.

Day 1 brought us to The Harbour Guesthouse at Amble, where the harbour flag staff strained to keep hold of the town colours as the wind tore it ever seaward. As we crossed the road to The Harbour Inn we hoped to see this same flag fluttering gently tomorrow morning. Amble town centre has only one restaurant, we were advised that it was unlikely that we would get in without a booking. The first priority was to sample an indigenous Geordie ale. The ale may not have been brewed north of the Tyne, but it was sampled never the less.

Chapter 3 Time and tide waits for no bike

Day 2 Amble to Berwick-Upon-Tweed

Lindisfarne is that mysterious Island soon to be surrendered to the North Sea. A combination of coastal erosion and global warming will one day deprive us of this spiritual sanctuary. St. Aidan first crossed to the Island in AD635 and offered it to all who seek peace and tranquillity. It took a while to get round to it but I was determined to get there today. The causeway to Holy Island starts at Beal and we were at Amble a good 45 miles south. Today's tide would allow a safe crossing until 1:30pm. An early breakfast would give us enough time to beat the tide and still afford time to '*stand and stare*'. The harbour flag staff told us that, although not as fierce as yesterday, the westerly wind was still a force to be reckoned with.

Taking the coast road out of Amble we head north through the beautiful village of Warkworth and see a Jewel of English Heritage, Warkworth Castle. The castle dates from AD1139, it was built to dominate and protect the surrounding flat lands. The need for these defences brings to mind a time when these walls were a necessity just for survival. The marauding hoards would take your life as naturally as a fox takes a rabbit.

Following the coast, again on largely traffic free roads, we pass through Alnmouth, Seaton House with its traditional lighthouse, and on to Boulmer. At Boulmer we took the alternative coastal route, this off road trail is a bit much for 700s x 19s particularly with panniers, but is well worth the trouble. The trail offers a feast of stunning views, deserted beaches, hidden coves and rocky outcrops into the pounding North Sea. Back on the main route we travel inland to Embleton and Chathill then to the coast again at Seahouses. At Seahouses we opted to leave route 1 for about three miles and took the B1340 to Bamburgh and its magnificent castle, truly worthy of the ancient capital of Northumbria that Bamburgh once was.

These detours and the persistent strong winds had sapped our reserves of time, '*time and tide*' and all that, we pressed on inland towards Glorprum. We soon came to a halt at a level crossing near Easington where we waited to cross the Eastcoast Main Line. Barriers down bells ringing, we felt the rumble in the ground then the blast of air that precedes 1000 ton of locomotive at 125mph. After crossing the main line we crossed the A1 and continued north through the woodlands of the Kyoie Hills and past St. Cuthbert's Cave. The cave in these wooded hills was the place the monks used to hide the remains of the saint (not Simon Templar, St. Cuthbert) when the Vikings arrived for a bit of R&P (a bit like R&R but with more sex and violence).

Just five miles now to the Causeway and just five minutes to the end of safe crossing. We leave the woodlands behind at Fenwick and through the flat pasture land to Mount Hooley. Here we again cross the A1 and the Eastcoast Mainline, Beal and the North Sea are clearly in view. The town of Beal occupies a raised position a mile or so from the coast and from this vantage point the island and castle look almost within grasp. Vehicles could still be seen crossing the causeway. 'Still time, go for it,' were my thoughts. Head down, this long descent on traffic free cycleway was quickly covered. The cycleway meets the causeway at a picnic area along side the road,

where many people seemed to be gathering, I didn't give it a thought as I raced through.

Onto the main road now, after a few hundred yards the road dips down to near water level. The waves could be seen testing its defences as I crossed the bridge and passed the Refuge. Down the second dip, back down to water level, then up onto the 3 mile straight to the Island. In full race mode - time is short, it's already way past safe crossing time. Head down, big gear, heart rate monitor screaming stop, 20 mph, then 25 then 30, and even 35mph I was riding like the wind. Little did I know at the time that this great speed was not due my phenomenal cycling skills, I wasn't riding like the wind, but with the wind, a bloody strong one at that.

In no time at all I was on the island and flying through the village on route to the castle. The priory was the next port on call. I afforded myself a quiet moment of contemplation and prayer before heading back to the mainland. If you venture this way, make time for this place, it really does have a special atmosphere of peace and tranquillity.

Back in race mode now, if I'm too late it's eight hours until the next safe crossing. Back through the village and onto open stretch, as soon as I passed the last house the wind hits like a brick wall. On the drops, on the middle ring and still making slow progress I realized just how that 30 mph sprint was achieved. Wet feet looked on the agenda. The three miles back to the refuge will be covered in pain and anxiety. The stretch from the island to the mainland is beautiful, peaceful and high and dry. To the north the wilds of a raging sea, to the south the plains of Elwick and Ross, to the west on the horizon are the woods of Kyloe. This is not the 'time to stand and stare' but to press on and hope that wind that is holding me back is succeeding where Canute failed.

As the causeway approaches the road dips to sea level, waves breach the rocky defences and spread across the road. What's all the fuss about I thought as weaved my way through the last inches of dry road. As I stopped to record the surrender of the road to the sea, I heard shouts and cheers in the distance. I realized that the crowd at the other side of the bridge were shouting and egging me on. It appears that people gather, like vultures, at high tide in the hope of seeing drama or mishap, the odd drowning or other such entertainment. I rode onto the bridge and passed the refuge, the road was completely awash with waves rippling across. The depth of water on one side of the road was about twelve inches on the other only about six. No time for the faint hearted, skirting the shallow end, with briny cascading over the panniers the final length was swam. Heard the saying 'does a fish need a bicycle' we nearly found out!

After a brief stop for lunch we left the vultures behind and took the coastal trail heading for Berwick. Sailing through the beautiful lanes we encountered an evil foe. Not the Vikings or a marauding Scottish clan - we could have handled them. This was much worse - the newly cut hawthorn hedge and seven punctures in less than one mile. We were well equipped and made short work of these little trials, our thoughts were with those brave leaders of the group we met on day 1. If our six well maintained wheels attracted seven punctures, logically their thirty ragtag wheels would need enough patches to repair the Titanic. We had 2 ½ puncture repair

technicians between 3. Nigel and Terry seem to be putting wheels back on before I've got mine off, but two repairers between fifteen, is there enough daylight?

The flat land trail gave way to the suburbs of Berwick-Upon-Tweed, the home of three celebrated bridges. Along Dock road and on to Main Street the ancient fifteen arch bridge is first into view. This is a truly magnificent grade 1 listed structure. The bridge, built in 1611, spans nearly 400 yards of 'the glorious Tweed'. To cross this bridge you need to be travelling from north to south, so as we were travelling north we made our crossing on the Royal Tweed Bridge. This is a relatively modern concrete structure, built in 1920. It does however afford a perfect vantage point to view other crossings.

Down stream the ancient stone arches crossed by James 1st, upstream Royal Border Bridge crossed by the 'Flying Scotsman'. The Royal Border Bridge is a wonder to behold, built in 1847, it stands 126 feet above the river, its 28 arches span 720 yards, nearly half a mile. It was designed by Robert Stephenson, son of "Rocketman" George Stephenson. (not David Bowie or Elton John).

Just a few hundred yards from the bridge we found our digs for the night 'Bridge View Guest House'. (Where do they get these names!) Berwick-Upon-Tweed is well worth a visit with or without a bike. Historic though it may be, a pub, ancient or modern, was the view we wanted to take in.

Chapter 4 St Aidan's Miracle

Day 3 Berwick-Upon-Tweed to Traquair

The morning showed us the full extent of our encounter along those lanes with *Crataegus* - three flat tyres. After quick repairs we consulted the trusty Coast & Castles handbook for the address of the local cycle shop, it was, would you believe on 'Bridge Street'. Inventive with names or what? Leaving Berwick we pass the Castle, cross the railway and then the Whiteadder. We were then in Scotland.

From Berwick Route 1 takes us southwest along the Tweed Valley and the river is now the border between these home nations. For the next fifty miles we are never more than a couple of miles from the river, and cross the border many times. Our first crossing was the Union Suspension Bridge at Horncliff. This bridge is really something. Built in 1820, at 449 feet long, it was the world's longest Wrought Iron Suspension Bridge. We stopped to take in the views and for the obligatory pictures. Now 'bridgeophobes' can rest assured that no more will get a mention until we reach 'The Firth of Forth'. Fortunately for cyclists, that thing we just crossed was closed to traffic, so an extra few miles traffic free were enjoyed as we headed for Norham, Ladykirk and Coldstream.

The road out of Horncliff Mains reveals one of the bloodiest battle grounds of our journey - Norham Castle. This medieval fortress was built in 1121 and was constantly fought over and besieged for the next 500 years. It stood firm against the Scots until 1513, when Henry VIII took time off from killing wives and invaded France. Whilst

he was away, James IV sneaked up with a few cannons and left the castle in the state we found it. Well that's our story and we're sticking to it.

The weather on day 3 was wonderful, bright and sunny but now we were heading into the wind. These long quiet country lanes gave us opportunity to experiment. Like many new and born-again cyclists I'm into meters and techno things.

Now those who know Nigel and Terry know they are 'big lads' (Please note this information was not ascertained in the showers.) Riding in front at a steady speed of 15 mph and with a steady cadence, a steady heart rate of 150bpm was recorded. Riding in the lee of the Nigel / Terry juggernaut, the same 15 mph was achieved with a heart rate of 135 to 140 i.e. 15bpm less . I don't know if this calculation is authentic but, my resting heart rate is 59bpm, my max rate is 191bpm, so the working range is 191minus 59 i.e.132. The 15bpm saved by riding behind the juggernaut is about 12.5 % . Now that's some saving.

The beauty of these borderlands is way above my power of description, every turn in the road, every brow you reach brings the feeling, as Kipling puts it 'Our England is a garden that is full of stately views, Of borders, beds and shrubberies and lawns and avenues'. We continue through these glorious lanes to Coldstream, Eccles, Stichill Eastfield, Edam and on to Kelso for tea and exceedingly good cakes.

Back on the country lanes enjoying the beauty of our land we came across a group of volunteer workers. Maybe these were .. *'the gardeners, the men and 'prentice boys'*. The group were maintaining the cycleway we were enjoying. It brought back to mind more words of Kipling (not him that did cakes the other one) After *'Our England is a garden that is full of stately views*, His thoughts turn to how this beauty is achieved. Even though we are now north of the boarder the sentiment is the same.

*' Our England is a garden, and such gardens are not made
By singing:--"Oh, how beautiful!" and sitting in the shade,
While better men than we go out and start their working lives
At grubbing weeds from gravel-paths with broken dinner-knives '*

Now I don't think they were using broken dinner knives but they were working, we were riding. Next time you ride the cycleway network, spare a thought the folk who made it possible. Next time you get the opportunity, maybe you could put your hand in you pocket or better still lend a hand. We're not the types to leave it all to others, are we?

From Kelso we zigzag through the lanes hugging the banks of the Tweed, and onto Clintmains, where we view the 'Three Hills of Eildon'. The name sounds like something on of Lord of the Ring, but the legend is better still. Legend has it that King Arthur and 1500 of his Knights are buried here awaiting the call to return and rescue the nation. With this in mind we were on best behaviour as we left St. Boswell for the familiar territory of Melrose.

Melrose is well known to the Bury section as a regular Easter Weekend destination, We took advantage of this visit to have 'tea with Olga'. The conversations over 'tea with crumpet' cannot be disclosed in this family publication but if you visit www.olga-from-the-volga

The route out of Melrose follows the first part of the well trodden Five Abbeys ride. A couple of years ago on the Easter club outing our group made a day of this delightful route. Still hugging the banks of the Tweed we continue west to Langlee where the river swings south between the Eildon Hills and Gala Hill. This area is deep in the heart of Sir Walter Scott country. As we pass between the Yair Forest and the foot hill of Moorfoot you imagine Ivanhoe charging through the woods or Rob Roy still searching for his father's fortune in this timeless deserted place.

By mid afternoon we are skirting the Traquair forest on a beautiful quiet road between the forest and the river. From the road we catch just a brief view of the 16th century ruin of Elibank Castle, for a better view a mountain bike is required. This forest boasts both the Innerleithen Mountain Bike Center and the Ettrickfoot and Yair Trails. Day 3 was the longest days ride of our journey covering 65 miles, at the Innerleithen bridge we checked the map before heading south to the tiny village of Traquair and our digs for the night.

Our landlady, a cheerful but somehow stoic country lady was kind enough to offer us a lift to the nearest pub in the metropolis of Innerleithen, the last remaining Traquair pub had recently closed. The 'Blues' were due to play away from home that night, Terry a keen Man City fan was pining news. The match was only screened on pay to view so it was more likely to see a blue moon than the blue's match. Not to be deterred the problem was put to the barman, he suggested the Unionist club as a long shot, but the only shot.

Nigel managed to blag us into this members only club and members, Terry explained his hearts desire and the stunned members agreed to switch from the rugby there were halfway through watching to accommodate this crazy City fan.

Against all the odds we sat down pint in hand to watch an almost interesting match which ended in triumph for the Blues. Now any doubter or non believers in the power of prayer, St. Aidan and Holy Island should now be converted, how else can you explain Man City winning an away match! Terry was so ecstatic at the result he almost got a round in.

Chapter 5 The tale of the lone piper

Day 4 Traquair to Edinburgh

The weather had been quite kind to us other than the now long forgotten gales of the first day, but the forecast was dreadful our last day. The Old School House, where we lodged, held a tremendous vantage point for views of the area. Every room in the house offered a different commanding view. Our destination was due North, the storm clouds over Moorfoot were ominous.

We crossed the Tweed for the last time at Innerleithen and headed north between Black Knowe and Priesthope Hill. Route 1 takes us on the quiet B709 through Lee Pen golf course. Now to save the blushes of one of our party I'll have to use a pseudonym here, so lets call this person 'Warby' Anyway as we proceeded through the golf

course one of the players 'sprinted' towards us. When I say sprinted, I mean he shuffled forward with an urgent look on his face.

He was about 100 years old, a sort of 'Dads Army Private Frazer' type (the one who says we're doomed, doomed!) He was accompanied by a Rab C. Nesbit type character. Anyway he stops us and asked "have we heard the story about the lone piper?" "Will it cost us anything" replied Warby. "No, No" replied Private Frazer, he went on to relate "many many years ago a lone Piper promised to pipe all the way between Innerleithen and Edinburgh and asked that should he fail he was to be buried where he fell". "Well", he continued, "he fell just five miles up the road from here, and from that day all visitors are asked to pay their respects at the grave of the lone piper". "So it won't cost us out then" said Warby. Rab C turns to Frazer and says "I thought us Scots were supposed to be tight"

We bade farewell to these characters and cycled into the gathering gloom over Moorfoot. At the appointed spot, marked with a simple stone cross, with no facility for collection or swipecard, we paid our respects to the lone piper.

The threatening storm proved no more than light drizzle as we climbed to the 1300 ft summit at Longshaw Law. The guide book promises a spectacular view of Edinburgh and the Firth of Forth from this summit but not so today. We could just make out ships at Port Seton as we started the long descent to the coast. I couldn't help the sad feeling of journeys end as the damp moorlands gave way to the grey streets of Dalkeith.

Once in the busy town traffic I assumed it would be urban sprawl all the way, but no such thing. The cunning route planner of Route 1 has saved a treat for the last 10 miles, the 'Innocent Railway cycle path' This traffic free cycle path takes you along the historic horse draw rail track, through parks and tunnels and delivers you into the heart of the City within a mile of the Holyrood Park and Journeys end.