

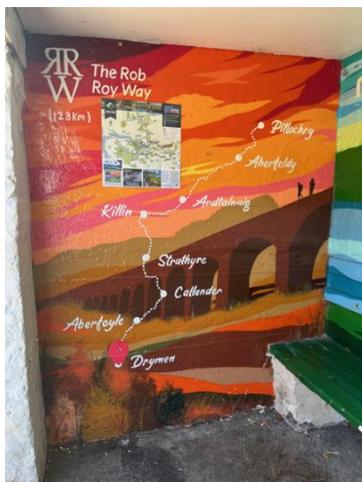


It was with great excitement that I waited at Gleneagles train station on Monday 18th August, for the beginning of my summer holidays. The Rob Roy Way is 128km (80miles) of mainly off road terrain from Drymen to Pitlochry which is reported to be the route Rob Roy MacGregor drove cows to market. It's a mix of terrain and offers a beautiful range of scenery from the lowlands of the west coast to the beginning of the cairngorms.

I had been planning for a couple of months to cycle the Rob Roy Way, my aim is to do the Badger Divide, which seems quite scary to someone who doesn't camp but loves being on their bike in the wide-open spaces of Scotland. I thought let's start small; work our way up to the Badger and use the Rob Roy Way as a tester / taster.

With my eMTB loaded up for an adventure off I went heading to Glasgow Queen Street, then onto the low-level line to Balloch. The sun was still shining when I alighted at Balloch and surprisingly the sun was still shining. Following the NCN 7 from Balloch to Drymen skirting round Croftamie and following part of the John Muir Way over the Endrick Water the first 10 miles was a lovely start to the afternoon. Passing walkers on their way to the West Highland Way, carrying some of the heaviest back packs I have ever seen!

Arriving in Drymen and finding the official start in the Square the obligatory photograph of the beautifully painted bus shelter was taken.



The start of the Rob Roy Way is not for the faint hearted; a good mile of continuous up hill is rewarded with stunning views over the moor looking back toward Drymen and Balloch. There wasn't a cloud in the sky.

The first proper descent of the day to take me into the Queen Elizabeth forestry which surrounds Aberfoyle was over too quickly. The next 5 miles was a relaxing cycle through trails I've done many times before and some new to me before I arrived at Aberfoyle. Filling up on my water bottles and a clarification of the route choice saw me leave in the later afternoon intent on making Callendar as planned by teatime.

The route behind Braeval was worth doing, the route although rocky in places is well marked and a mix of forestry tracks, felled forestry, single track through bracken and a very little pushing of the bike. If it had been raining the experience may have been less pleasant but I'm glad I took it.

The views over Loch Venachar were stunning with the sun reflecting off the loch surface, if I had been better prepared, I would have gone in for a dip – must remember the swimming costume next adventure.



Rolling into Callendar but the cycle path off the Duke's pass I decided that I would push on to Lochearnhead. It's only 15 miles and I knew there wasn't much climbing to do if I followed the cycle path.

The end of day 1 I arrived at Lochearnhead, ready for a shower, something to eat and a good night's sleep. My motorised support duly arrived and took me home.

Day 2 I had a bit more kit with me as I was spending the night in Aberfeldy. Arriving in Lochearnhead I was duly dropped off at the same place I had finished the night before and set off up the climb onto the old railway line. This is one of my favourite cycle routes, no matter the weather the views are stunning so despite the low cloud and slight drizzle I left in good spirits.



Having been planning this adventure for some time I knew there were options, I could follow the route down into Killin and then along the Loch side to Ardeonaig or as I opted for – I followed the high route which completely bypasses Killin staying high above Loch Tay



The route goes up and up going round by Lochan Breaclaich before dropping down to Ardeonaig following what can only be described as a drunk sheep track. Thankfully the cloud base had lifted by the descent, or I might still be looking for the way markers.

The route follows the road along the side of Loch Tay for several miles before I arrived at Acharn, I was ready for a wee cup of tea and some home baking. The quite literally hidden gem that is the Rob Roy Pitstop



This hidden gem was perfectly placed to refuel before the next climb up to the Falls of Acharn and onto the Queens Way which leads high into Aberfeldy via a short section of the Glen Quaich Road before going off road again before finally joining Urlar Road. The actual route is down the Birks O' Aberfeldy – this is beyond my mountain bike skills, so I opted for the safer descent into Aberfeldy and my accommodation for the night.

Day 2 had been a tougher day although less miles there was lots more climbing than Day 1 and rougher terrain, I finished the day very happy and feeling accomplished with 6% battery on the bike.

Day 3 was a much shorter day and started off with a relaxed breakfast before heading to Pitlochry. I had planned to be in Pitlochry for 13:00 and aiming for the mid-afternoon train.

Cycling out of Aberfeldy I picked up the river side route heading for Grandtully, the route meanders along the side of the river on a single “sheep” track before picking up the wider old railway line on the approach to Grandtully before arriving at the campsite which was once the station sidings and platform.

Cycling out to the main road and crossing the River Tay by the Green Bridge into Strathtay the route goes off road and climbs on a track that quickly becomes unrideable having been blocked by a fallen tree earlier in the year, needing lots of pushing the bike through gorse bushes and up and over old walls. I had recced this part of the route several weeks before and decided to take the route through Ballechin estate to get to the high ground to descend into Pitlochry. The view back towards Aberfeldy and surrounding hills was well worth the detour



The plateau crossing the mining road is a nice final section to round off the route before the fun descent towards the A9 and eventually into Pitlochry via the suspension bridge.



Day 3 was a much shorter day and with the reward of places to eat in Pitlochry it is worth booking a later train, so you're not rushed. I decided to jump on the next train as it was direct to Gleneagles, and I had a nice, relaxed lunch in Auchterarder before heading home slowly to get the kit washed ready for the following days excursion to Balquhiddy and the advertised burial place of the Man himself in the McLaren Church.

It was a great few day's bike packing for softies, no camping involved and a leisurely pace to enjoy the scenery and refill my resilience bucket.