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Riding Wild

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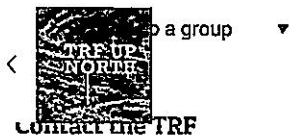
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Trail bikes and exploration go hand in hand. Add a sleeping bag and you have a multi-day adventure. Last summer Central Bristol TRF headed out on a 'outward-bound' exercise into the unknown.

Dean Allen lifts the lid on their wild ride.

I have been putting on events and raising money with Central Bristol TRF (CBTRF) over the last eight years and can honestly say that it has been very successful, and I have enjoyed myself immensely. The "Ubley Muddle" and "Checkpoints" are the 2 events that I am most proud of especially as neither of them are speed events. "Checkpoints" is a navigational challenge and the "Ubley Muddle" is a show of technical skill with observed sections. Members of the TRF have been delighted to use these two events to build their confidence in riding and has enabled them to go on and take part in Long distance trials or LDTs as they are known. However, 2017 saw me taking a break in the organisation of events and pursuing some of my other riding ambitions. One thing that I had on the bucket list was to do an outward-bound type of exercise where I leave a destination and wild camp the route over several days until I reach my chosen destination. All whilst travelling and navigating across the country on green roads.

I gathered a small team of like minded CBTRF members and began to plan our expedition. My travel companions were to be Alcuin Wilkie, Darth Speed, Tom Cruise, Kevin draper and his wife. Now part of the emphasis of this trip was the art of packing light, only the essentials as everything had to be carried on the bikes by ourselves.

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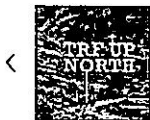
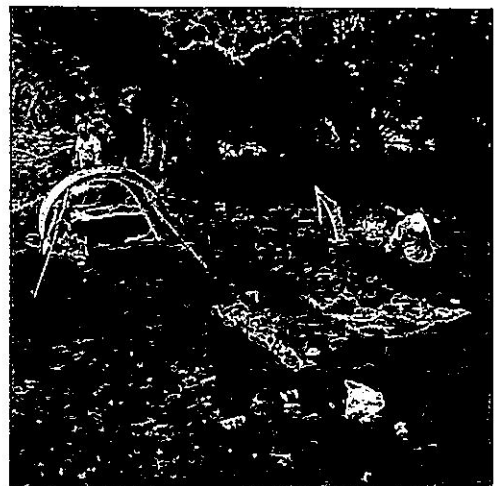
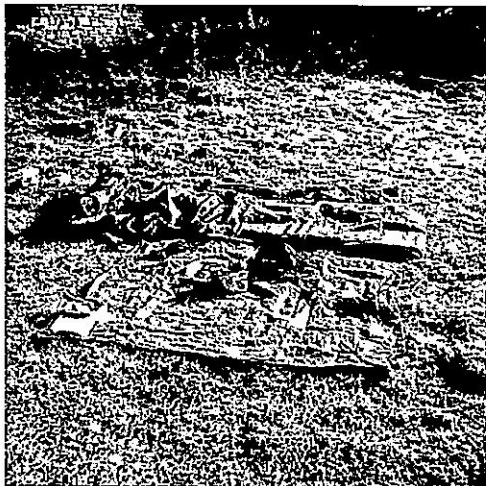
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Now it was quite clear that everyone's idea of essentials was very different. On the one hand you had myself with my 30-year-old sleeping bag, self-inflating pack light roll mat, tarp and bivi bag (incidentally I suffered every night of the trip due to my poor choice of sleeping bag). On the other hand, we had someone rock up with family size tent, double airbed, pyjamas and slippers.

Now all we had to do was plan our route. I spent hours on Basecamp identifying the different green roads that were available to ensure that our route was a strictly legal one. Fitting this all into a time frame and knowing where all the garages are whilst maintaining our direction of travel was no easy task. One thing that has always fascinated me was the sense of enjoyment that you get whilst navigating the unknown, following trails that are hardly visible and yet somehow still able to arrive at your destination. The only navigational problems we encountered were due to obstructions on the route. One of these was a massive piece of farming equipment that had been parked in front of a gate that led onto a green road. The gate had also been locked and a fence had been erected around it. We indeed spoke to the farmer who was unwilling to budge on the subject and hence denying us a truly fantastic legal green road.





However, if we hadn't had to make a diversion then we would never had met a fantastic gentleman who was in his 94th year. His name was John Richards and we spotted him from quite some distance beating the ground with a stick out in the middle of nowhere half way up a mountain.

As we went through the gate three crazy barking Collies came running towards us and gave us quite a fright. It turns out that he is a farmer and was out attacking the thistles on his land that he couldn't reach by tractor. Not only this but the stick he was using was his walking stick, that he needed because he had a broken leg. He was a most interesting man and we chatted for some time about the changes in the world and the fact that he was older than the queen. His secret – a drop of brandy on an evening. Anyway, we said our goodbyes and I promised him that 2018 I would be back and would drop him in a bottle of brandy.

Our first night out sleeping under the stars was a few miles past Abergavenny. Finding it was tricky as we had to pass through a farm. On arrival I got off my bike and had a little walk around as there were multiple gates and I wanted to ensure that we were on the path and not on private property. This was the spot I had earmarked on the map. A huge green road that climbed whilst traversing a rather large hill. It did not disappoint, we had a natural supply of water that had filtered through the moss, the shelter of some trees – great for someone with a hammock, plenty of dead wood for a small fire and a cracking view.

I had mixed feelings about the destination I had chosen for camp 2. It was on part of a route that I use when travelling around Hay-on-Wye which is next to a river that we cross and a byway. All was going well until around 8pm when a very angry farmer turned up and verbally assaulted us all. We left quickly, and the other guys had decided that they would find another place to sleep. I carried on the route for another 5-10 miles and slept alone. It was amazing to have been out on my own, settling down with a nice cup of tea to watch the sunset. As the darkness crept over me a suddenly became aware of a ghostly sound that I could hear every so often. I must admit for a while I was worried about being eaten alive by some terrible beast yet was so tired I soon fell asleep.





The next day I got up and travelled a little further along the route and then found a tree to lean the bike on a wait for the others to catch back up on the route. Whilst I waited for them a car went past and about 30 seconds later I heard that dreadful sound again from the night.... Turns out it was a cattle grid that I could hear during the night, I nearly peed myself when I found out and thought what a daft idiot. I didn't wait long before the others caught up to me. It turns out that they had managed to track down the owner of the land, a local lord, who gave them permission to set up a camp some hundred or so yards away from the angry farmer.

Later that day we stopped at a very small friendly campsite for a cup of tea and to discuss where we were going to sleep that night. We didn't want another night facing an angry farmer. Darth suggested we stay where we were at the campsite, so before long we were indulging in hot showers and a field to ourselves all for £5 each. Note to all planning a similar adventure expedition – it is very handy to have one or two planned nights in a campsite to make use of their facilities and continue your journey fresh and revived.

After four days riding and sleeping rough we only had half a day riding to do until we would reach our destination. The forecast that day was for heavy rain – so I decided to call in on a farmer friend of mine in Carno who willingly put us up in a barn with a pub next door. Tom ending up sleeping the night on a big bundle of wool which is probably the comfiest nights sleep he ever had.





In summary our adventure was a great success we found some great camping spots, loads of green roads were discovered (that I can now incorporate into other runs that I do) and nobody suffered any injuries or hypothermia.

Lots and lots of planning went into this and we did have a back up vehicle driven by Kevin and his wife which carried spare wheels etc. in case we needed some heavy-duty bike maintenance on route or if anybody sustained injury they could be picked up with their motorbike.

So I would just like to say that if you have ever been out green roading and wished that you could just keep going, if ride outs just aren't long enough for you and instead of being glad that you are back at home with your feet up after a day's riding you wished you were still out on the open road, may I suggest you get planning your own adventure and don't let fear hold you back.



Greg Villalobos

6 Comments



Vincent Austin says:

June 7, 2018 at 1:53 pm

[Log in to Reply](#)

Excellent write up Greg sounds like a superb trip makes me think I need to organize something similar



Greg Villalobos says:

June 7, 2018 at 2:40 pm

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I know a guy...

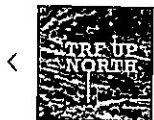


Vincent Austin says:

June 7, 2018 at 3:16 pm

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I keep me informed I have a bunch I ride out with will drag them along



Alcuin Wilkie says:

[Log in to Reply](#)

June 11, 2018 at 9:01 am

Nice work Greg!



Liam WHITCHER says:

July 3, 2018 at 10:03 am

Great trip. Very basic.

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Charlotte Tyers Hunter says:

September 6, 2018 at 10:06 pm

This sound like my type of holiday! 😊

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