

## WEST IRELAND BIKE TOUR 2017.

The members of this tour came from CTC Midweekers and the 1066 Club, seven in all, and were Sue Burton, Sheena Macgowan, John Gallsworthy, Adrian Hills, David Newman, Bernie Oastler and me Rob Foster (who dreamed up the scheme so became the leader).



The plan was to cycle tour up the west coast of Ireland, from Tralee to Ballina, towns chosen because they had rail links to Dublin. Much harder, it turned out, was getting to and from these places! – train to Holyhead, ferry to Dublin and then Irish trains to the west. But bike spaces on trains are limited, require booking well ahead and the Irish Rail website had fallen over! However, David did a great job of booking a large minibus for the transfers to/from the west coast.

So we made it to a nice hostel in Tralee on Saturday May 6, and celebrated by sampling the Guinness. Sunday was a lovely day and we did a ride out into the Dingle peninsula via Anascaul, circling the fine mountain of Slieve Mish, ending with a steep hill back to Tralee. Sue etc. cooked a nice risotto then off to a bar with some of that cheery Irish live music.



Monday we headed north, having a great picnic (one of many) in the sun at Ballybunnion, then a ferry took us across the mighty River Shannon. Another hostel at Kilrush, and a pub supper. This pattern continued as we progressed north, stopping at more hostels –

Lisdoonvarna, Galway, Clifden, Westport and a B&B at Ballina. We averaged 45-50 miles a day.



There was some excellent scenery, reminding me of west Scotland, notably the huge cliffs at Mohar, The Burren with it's limestone scenery and old tombs, and gorgeous Connemara. The weather continued dry and sunny, pretty amazing for wet boggy Ireland!

However, we were not without a few problems – a stomach bug affected David, and most of us succumbed to this at some time later, making cycling hard work when ill. I missed it, but had a 'funny turn' over dinner and had to be checked over. Sue was fit and healthy, but her rear tyre wasn't

– a large tear appeared, in wild empty country – fortunately it held on until a loud bang was heard about 4 miles from home; a local gave her a lift; meanwhile Adrian had gone ahead to get to the bike shop in Clifden to buy a new tyre.

A low point was the drunken lads at 3 am who woke us all up returning to our hostel on Saturday night, thanks boys. Better, was more nice bars with music and a coffee stop at Kylemore Abbey in a pretty valley.

On Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> we piled into the minibus early for the run back to Dublin. Five boarded the ferry home, while John & I spent two nights in Dublin, and did two informative guided walking tours of the city before making the ferry crossing on Tuesday.



A very enjoyable trip, we agreed. So lucky with the weather.

Rob Foster.