



Clockwise from this photo:
The bog begins. Corwen Station. Keir with lunch for four. Keir, Sam and Ross at the memorial. Gravel biker Ross



as an ibex, came Ross Adams, another colleague. Living just over the hill, he had decided to join our adventures for the day. Wearing shorts and riding on the drops, you'd have thought he was on a different day out from the rest of us, riding our fatter-tired all-terrain bikes in trousers.

A bunch of withered daffodils rested beneath the time-battered memorial to Wayfarer, 'Lover of Wales'. Close by a lamb bleated for its absent mother. The wind and rain swept in. In such company, however, this bleak-sounding setting was anything but. The conditions, the landscape and company rekindled our appetite for the outdoors. Nothing could have dented our enthusiasm for the ride ahead.

NIGHT ON THE HILLS

After briefly paying our respects to the ride's founder, we headed down smoother, if steeper, tracks towards the road to Cynwyd. Reaching the bottom, our overheated rotors squealed as we halted at the metalled road and the first cars we'd seen all day.

Riding with a local always has benefits. Ross led us along an old railway trail, which once would have taken passengers to Barmouth and its famous bridge. Now this railway, resurrected by volunteers, ends in

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Corwen, where we were stopping for lunch. On the wall of what is now Ross's barber's shop there's a CTC Repairer's sign.

Filled with pasties, we then climbed trails that traversed Llantysilio Mountain. This grassy bridleway seemed little travelled, which may have been due to the frequent locked gates that would put off all but the most determined.

By now the sun had chased away our waterproofs. Clear skies rewarded the morning's efforts with views towards Llandegla Forest. We bade farewell to Ross at the Ponderosa Café, after he passed on further pearls of local wisdom for the following day's riding.

In the golden evening, we wild camped on the summit of Cynr-y-Brain. Feasting on porcini risotto, with a wee nip of Keir's scotch to keep away the chill, we hit the sack as the night's stars were lost in the clouds.

The following morning bore echoes of the previous. We brewed tea under my tent's fly, breakfasting in the dry on overnight oats.

Visibility was almost zero. With a quick look at the map and compass, we headed east down a likely looking track, which we hoped would lead to the World's End.

Battling mire on the descent was easier ▶