



Water – lots of it – was the main feature of (almost) solo-rider **Dan Campbell's** quest to complete a DIY Super Randonneur with AAA points. In the latest extract of his diary of road trips, the Stoke-on-Trent-based Audaxer describes his encounters with waterfalls, potholes, sludge, mud and mire, plus an amorous bull, a team of Morris dancers, and a worse-for-wear hen party...

Why does it always rain on me?

ROCESTER AND THE MERMAID INN (AUDAX DIY, 100KM, 2.5 AAA)

For the second time in the year I tackled this Peak District route, and happily the rain held off until the last six miles from home. I took shelter, not for the first time this summer, in a shop doorway as the monsoon flooded by. I'd left home a little later than normal (4.30am) but was still able to watch the sunrise over the White Peaks – lovely. Although the rain had been kind to me, this time the wind was just as strong.

I stopped at Milldale, and as there was no-one about, I listened to the water slowly cascading over the rocks, which was very peaceful. I was hoping that I'd be able to grab a brew at Wetton Tea Room, but it was still closed when I went through.

As I left Wetton I stopped to watch a big brown bull pushing the farmer's land cruiser sideways along the field while trying to reach the lady cows who were heading off for milking. This was amusing, but also a little scary. In the end the farmer got out of his land cruiser and admonished the bull while rubbing the creature's head. This worked a treat. I spent a pleasant 15 minutes chatting with the farmer about life in general before moving on.

I was feeling tired, but was making good time compared to my previous attempt at this route. Not having the rain helped a lot, and the roads in the Peaks were still very quiet. A car did try to overtake me on the steep and fast descent, but, at 42mph, the driver couldn't keep up. I was up the next hill and turned off for Elkstone Valley before the car caught up. I was able to ride up this valley climb both times without stopping which was an excellent result.

As I approached Ipstones I had to slow down as there were cars abandoned everywhere – the Ipstones Fete! I stopped at the corner shop as normal and had a small bottle of blue milk – yummy. As I stood there, a group of Morris dancers playing instruments led the parade across the main road and out of sight.



A sticky encounter with a group of Morris Dancers at the Ipstone Fete

Background is the waterfall at Pistyll Rhaeadr