

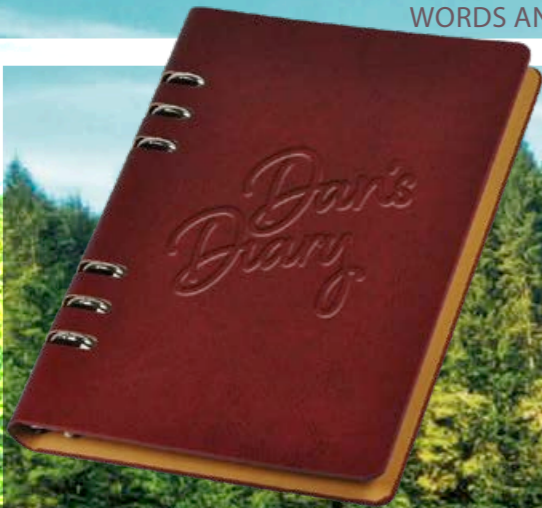
DAN'S VITAL STATS

Location: Stoke on Trent
Bike: 2011 9-speed aluminium tank
Age: 44
Weight: Wheel breaking (110kg)
Fitness: broken and rebuilt
Resting Heart Rate: 65
BMI: Obese

WHR (waist/hip ratio): High
Favourite food: See food!

All Dan's ride reports are here:

<https://dancampbell.co.uk/audax-ride-list/>



Seriously-solo rider, **Dan Campbell**, feeling slow and sluggish and more than a little overweight, decided he was in need of a challenge. So the Stoke-on-Trent based Audaxer set himself a series of testing DIY trials for the summer of 2019. Here's Dan's Diary so far...

Boy, you're gonna carry that weight

AT THE END of last year I decided that my primary target for 2019 would be to complete the Super Randonneur with AAA points. This was mainly due to my love of hill climbing... a love which is significantly hindered by my oversized belly. My secondary target was to achieve 20 AAA points and the brevet 2000 and 3000.

I had a slow start, thanks to heavy work commitments running into July. However, this provided me with the opportunity to explore the DIY world of Audaxing which, to my surprise, is very simple: create a route; purchase a virtual brevet card; upload one's GPS track of the route; do the route and; upload the route. The hardest thing I found was trying to identify the correct legal officer to assign the brevet card to.

THE PEAK PUNISHER (DIY, 100KM, 3AAA)

My first DIY was back in February when the promise of a warm sunny day dragged me out from behind the office desk. A DIY Peak District route was planned from home in Stoke on Trent, and paid for. The morning was cold, and I quickly had my first puncture. Then about one hour later my second puncture. I'm glad that I took the time glue a repair patch on the first tube. I don't think I've ever used two tubes on one ride. At this point, it was about making it home, which I did in a little over nine hours. This made me realise that all the tools and spare equipment I carry is worth it, otherwise it would have been a long walk home or a very cold wait for the bike rescue team (my wife!) to pick me up.

However, this ride did make me realise how much fitness is lost over the winter period as I was struggling to maintain speed and climb hills which during the summer I could comfortably achieve. On reflection, it was not the volume of climbing, rather it was the severity of the climbs. Most climbs were greater than 10 per cent.

Note to self : lose some weight and get back on the turbo trainer!

ASHBOURNE LOOP (DIY, 100KM)

At the start of April I did my 100km DIY Ashbourne Loop from Stoke. I'd planned to achieve 1.5 AAA points and even with the overall height gained being greater than the 1500 metres it still fell short when it went through the Audax AAA validation software. This is something to be aware of when planning routes with AAA points. It was suggested that the validation tool will be released to the membership at some point in the future. This ride was excellent as I had sunshine all day and I stopped in Ashbourne for breakfast, which worked well as it was just before the start of the climbing. There are three big climbs on the route, the most challenging being the climb out of the Manifold Valley to Grindon.

I could definitely tell the difference that the turbo training sessions had made to my fitness and general speed since February. However, I did experience a lot of discomfort from my knee (heading towards a knee replacement) but I know from experience that this reduces as the season progresses. So, I eased back on the effort and the swelling was localised to the lateral side of the patella.



The Peak Punisher



Ham village centre Staffordshire

**THE GOYT VALLEY
(DIY, 100KM, 2.25AAA)**

A week later I completed my DIY route over to the Goyt Valley. This time I was able to check the AAA points against the AAA validating software. The route was a straight-out-and-back again, and took in a lot of the climbs from the 100km Peak Audax rides from last year. The weather was amazing. I had clear blue skies all day and I spent way too much time taking photographs and stopping at cafes along the way.

I made an amateur mistake of not taking sun cream so when I arrived home I was as red as a beetroot. Again, this route demonstrated to me that my climbing ability had significantly reduced since last year. However, I really love the climb out of the Goyt Valley even though it felt much harder this year. I realised I still needed to lose the winter belly and do more work on the turbo trainer.



The Goyt Valley

Tilly's Cafe in Bunbury



**A PLACE CALLED HOPE
(DIY, 200KM)**

My first 200km ride of the year was from Stoke to a town called Hope near Chester. My intention was to stop at a riverside spot at Chester for lunch. When I arrived there were large queues at the cafe doors, so I decided to push on to the cafe on the high street at Bunbury. The extra distance in combination with the heat of the day left me feeling dehydrated and low on energy. I really enjoyed this ride as all the controls were a good distance apart and the routes between them were pleasant, and for the most part, off the main roads. On arriving home, I was tired, but still feeling strong. The long climb to up to my house was actually enjoyable!

**STOKE TO THE SEA
(DIY, 400KM, 5AAA)**

MThriving on my success from my previous DIY routes, I created a route which ran from Stoke all the way to the beach at Aberystwyth before returning via the Cheshire plains. Really this ride was an extension of John Hamilton's Wrekin-to-the-sea route with a few tweaks. Before I started, I knew that it was 50/50 whether I would make it back and even less likely that I would make it back within the Audax time limit. But you have to take risks if you are to challenge yourself; a thought explored by Collin Bezan in the summer edition of Arrivee in which he talked of the "twin imposters of triumph and disaster".

I cycled overnight, taking in the Long Mynd in Shropshire before arriving at Newtown for breakfast. By far the best part of the route was the climb up through the Elan Valley – the reflections of the dams and bridges in the water were fantastic and made the ride feel magical. I was feeling very strong and positive about the ride when I arrived at the beach (about 140miles). This continued right up until I started the long walk up Machynlleth mountain road. By the time I reached the top the combination of the sun and tiredness in the legs had taken its toll. Seven miles outside Newtown I came to a grinding stop. I simply could not get enough energy into the blood stream. This was a new experience for me. I took 10 minutes before continuing to cycle slowly onwards. During this time, I decided to stay the night in a Newtown hotel, or catch a train, whichever was the cheapest. Yes... I DNFed this one. In my mind this also marked the end of my quest for the Super Randonneur with AAA points.

**LLANDUDNO FOR BREAKFAST
(DIY, 300KM)**

Using my knowledge and experience from the 200km DIY route to Chester I planned a route which would take me across the Cheshire plains, the Welsh mountains and on to Llandudno for breakfast...well lunch. The route through the Cheshire plains was straightforward and relatively flat with controls at Wem and Ellesmere. From here it was a short jump over to Llangollen where I followed the A5 to Corwen and all the way to Betws-y-Coed and Llandudno. To be honest the roads were quiet and even though there was a steady flow of traffic it felt more like a Sunday morning than a bank holiday weekend. This ride was excellent and the weather nice; not too hot but the sun was out. There were lots of cafes and roadside stops which meant I could pull over for a rest any time I liked. I spent the section between Llangollen and Betws-y-Coed reflecting on the last time I rode this section when I was training for the End-to-End.



Owain Glyndŵr monument, Corwen



Caban Coch dam from the visitor's centre

SO WHAT'S NEXT?

I have a 400km DIY route over Lincolnshire and the east coast planned which I am looking forward to riding. It feels like a consolation prize, but I will see how the summer goes. I also need to complete my 20 AAAs and few more 200km for my brevet 2000 and 3000.