

# The Wolf Rides

## Stories and Experiences of a Young Biker

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## Yesterday was so lush!

[MARCH 8, 2015](#) ~ [THERUBBERWOLF](#) ~ [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

Just a little quickie, yesterday was by far the best biking day so far this year. Bright, clear and warm(ish), on my way around and back home from Reading, I must have seen 30 plus bikers out enjoying the weather!

Is this a sign of things to come, or is it just a blip in the normaly grey Oxfordshire weather? Only time will tell. Fun!

## There And Back Again – A Wolf's Tail

[MARCH 3, 2015](#) ~ [THERUBBERWOLF](#) ~ [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

Or, *The Scotlandening: Revenge of the Rainblizzards*. Whichever you prefer.

So, I have just returned from a wonderful Holiday up in the western Highlands of Scotland, in Ardgor House; a large country house just to the south-west of Fort William, across the tidal Loch Linnhe.

Oh my dang, what an amazing holiday. The journey up was great, my time spent there was great, and the journey back down was easier than I thought it would be. Good times with good friends, and *copious* amounts of good booze.

The ride up to Scotland from Oxford was in total just under 500 miles, with around four stops for fuel, and about the same coming back down. Red Five holds enough petrol for about 220 miles at motorway speeds, so I scheduled in plentiful stops along the way to both stretch my legs and to fill my tank (*and stomach, long distance riding is hungry work, it seems!*) So I ended up stopping about every hour and a half with my friends, who were driving with me. As it turned out, I was actually the only

one riding, but the journey's beauty more than made up for any perceived negatives, of which there were few. Plus, I find biking to be much more interesting than sitting in a car, especially for long journeys.

We took a route from my house up past Birmingham, then through up to the incredibly lush Tebay Services (*absolutely worth a visit if you're going anywhere within 100 miles of it*) and onwards up through the Highlands to Ardgour House. The journey started off as you might expect, achingly dull. When it comes to motorways, the UK doesn't seem to know what to do with them, and leaves them as long boring stretches of road, with barely a wind turbine to look at. So, for the first couple hundred miles it was just a long stretch of three-lane road, livened up only by a brief engine power test with my friend as we passed Birmingham, and the music I pumped into my helmet. The *'This Is Your Life'* tribute album to Ronnie James Dio thundered along in my ears as we made our way northward, along with the occasional direction crackling in over the radio. As we got nearer to Tebay Services and the Lake District, I was stunned. I've lived in Oxfordshire for a while now, and got used to not seeing hills. We rounded the side of a slope and the outskirts of the Lakes opened out as far as the eye could see, hills and valleys shining golden brown in the midday sun. For the next hour or so the journey stopped being about roads, and started being about what the roads were taking us through; valley after beautiful valley, the motorways winding around the hills in what turned out to be quite enjoyable bends to bike through.



(<https://thewolfrides.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/imag10231.jpg>)

Apologies for the blurriness, that's the price you pay for getting a picture from a car across, and having the passenger taking it on a phone. Such is life!

As we forged north and jumped Hadrian's wall, the roads became progressively more less interesting, and the weather set in for the worse. It began to rain lightly as it had been doing further south but luckily I was clad in some of Alpine Star's *Andes Drystar* touring gear and Sidi's *Black Rain* boots, and my recently purchased Rukka 3-Finger gloves. I was bone dry, which is good, because soon after my fourth and final fillup, there was a **RAINBLIZZARD**.

I have ridden three times when it's been snowing. The first two times are when firstly, the snow caught me out in Abingdon as I was banking and had downed two inches of the white stuff in about 15 minutes and secondly, when I was going home from Thame. Both times I fell off, at low speed. The third time was the *Rainblizzard*. It started as light snow, and I got a call over my VERTIX *Raptor-i* (*a very capable Bluetooth headset*) from my concerned friend; knowing full well my opinion of snow-riding (*it's both insane and really insane*) to check if I wanted to stop. As I saw the the snow wasn't

settling anywhere, and with no parking anywhere nearby I chose to plough onwards, dropping my speed as we did so. Within a full minute visibility had dropped to about fifty yards, and I had to clear my visor with the regularity of a car's wipers. Still the snow refused to settle anywhere, so I dropped my speed a little again and pushed on. I was starting to worry though. The sheer volume of snow and water the the sky was dumping on me was likely to do *something* bad to me, I just knew it... And then as if someone had just flipped a switch, we came out of the Rainblizzard's shadow into sunshine and blue skies. *Scotland*, am I right? Thank god it didn't come back on the return journey, it wasn't pleasant.

Not long after that, we got far enough north to start seeing hills again, and before we knew it we were approaching the Highlands. I lived on Exmoor for five years, and loved it. The Highlands are like Exmoor on crack; towering, mountainous hills and valleys and moor filled with pools of standing water and the occasional river, thoroughly beautiful. As we passed the inevitable 'Welcome To The Highlands' sign, I really got to open the bike up a bit more, getting right into the long curves and tight wiggles between the tracks of straight. As the rock-salt stained snow along the sides of the road looked fresh and the temperature hovering been -0 and +0 degrees (*according to my friend's MG3*) I had to reign it in a little. Luckily on the journey back down south, I had no such fetters, and let rip on the roads. If you've never experienced the Highlands and you live anywhere near them, get on your bike and go there. Right now, I don't care. *Go*. I'll wait.



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See what I mean?

Not long after we had wiggled our way around a few lochs we finally came across the ferry, nine and a half hours after we had set out. I had only had four hours of sleep the night before (*it's a long boring story, filled with soldering irons and stupidity*) I was exhausted. I walked the bike onto the ferry, up the cold, wet, metal ramp and sat, waiting for something to happen. The beauty of the second half of the ride had worn off now we were almost at our goal, and I half-heartedly snapped a picture of the ferry crossing. I'm glad I did, the skyline was fantastic, and I wish I had the brainpower left to realise it at the time.



([https://thewolfrides.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/img\\_20150221\\_181256.jpg](https://thewolfrides.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/img_20150221_181256.jpg))

See what I mean?

After I had tentatively rolled off the slippery metal ramp of Corran Ferry, it was a short few minutes before we turned into the little village of Clovullin and onto Ardgour House. I crawled behind the cars in front, watching them bounce and jostle their way over potholes and rocks in the darkness as Red Five wound her way through them like a champ, and we had finally done it. We were at Adgour House, and in for a week of relaxation, sledging on Ben Nevis, playing snooker, drinking and eating (*lots and lots of eating*).

After I dragged myself upstairs to bed to sleep, that was.



([https://thewolfrides.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/pano\\_20150224\\_0855372.jpg](https://thewolfrides.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/pano_20150224_0855372.jpg))

I took this a couple of days after we arrived, when the sun finally showed its face. It was a stunning location, and truly a amazing holiday. Click for fullview.

There were a few thing that made the extreme journey tolerable, if not enjoyable. Red Five is the obvious candidate for *Most Awesome Thing* mostly because of how competent a bike she is, especially with the tall screen and handguards. Shoei's *GT-Air* helmet was comfortable and quiet, this coupled with the phenomenal Pinlock earplugs made for a reasonably fatigue-free ride, even for the eight or so hours I was riding. Blasting it's way through my earplugs (*in the best way*) was VERTIX's *Raptor-i* Bluetooth headset. This thing needs its own review, honestly. Even at motorway speeds my music was loud and crisp enough to enjoy, which probably helped saved my sanity from snapping as I rode the mind-numbing motorways. When the Rainblizzard arrived it performed well again, taking

a call at 70 with excellent clarity, cutting through all wind-noise and earplugs with ease. The battery life is also *incredible*, I got to *and* from Scotland on one and a quarter charges, listening to music at full volume for almost 700 miles. Incredible! I've been riding since 2010 and until this year I had no idea how necessary a good headset is if you ride a lot. Thank you, VERTIX. And thank you, Alpine Star, Rukka and Sidi for making such waterproof kit. You probably saved me from dying of exposure or frostbite or dysentery or all three with how warm and dry I stayed. I have never until this year had waterproof front pockets, and I can't actually work out how I managed it for all that time.



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Red Five, the helmet and the Raptor-i, tested but unbroken.

Thank you for reading, reader. Stay shiny side up! And *please*, for your own sake, see the world. It won't come to you.

## I am very wet, but very happy.

FEBRUARY 16, 2015 ~ THERUBBERWOLF ~ LEAVE A COMMENT

Just got back home from putting 110 miles on the new bike as the rain drew in. I'll do a larger write-up about my experience later, but for now my biggest lesson was that you do *not* put your waterproofs *inside* your boots when it's raining. It won't be immediate, and it might be a while in coming, but you'll end up with a pint of rainwater in each of your boots, and then you will be horrendously sad.

I've got another 100 mile round-trip to do later on to get some walkie talkies from a friend (*part of a beta-test I'm working on with VERTIX, a headset manufacturer*) so now I'm fervently waiting for my kit to dry over every radiator we have. Curse our lack of tumble-dryer...

Wish me luck.

# Hello there!

FEBRUARY 7, 2015FEBRUARY 7, 2015 ~ THERUBBERWOLF ~ 1 COMMENT

*So apparently, this is my very first post.*

Hello, and welcome to my biking journal! Over the coming days I'll be posting a few things to set the scene, about my current bike, my new bike, an upcoming trip, that sort of thing.

Watch this space!

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