

## Great Rides

# THE SHOW ON THE ROAD

Touring a show around the country usually means driving. For cycle-poet Caroline Burrows, it meant living out of her Dawes Horizon's panniers



### CAROLINE BURROWS

Caroline is a poet, writer, teacher, performer and one of Cycling UK's 100 Women in Cycling 2022. Find her on social media @VerseCycle, with links to her work at <https://linktr.ee/versecycle>

**M**aybe there's a medieval bard in my genealogy. That's my theory why I toured my poetry show 'Turning Pedals into Poems' from Bristol to Berwick-upon-Tweed over seven weeks in 2022. I performed in arts and community centres, bicycle shops, libraries, book shops, record shops and ethical shops.

I'd trialled a tour the year before, after being chosen for mentorship by The Handlebards, the Shakespeare Theatre Cycling Company. In 2022, they helped me make a funding application and a venue spreadsheet, a word usually avoided by poets. Tour planning began at the year's start, juggling routes, venues, accommodation, publicity images, promotion and rehearsing.

In retrospect, it was perhaps too much for one cycle-poet to manage. In March I got Covid, followed by post-viral heart inflammation, making cycling across England seem far-fetched. Then the funding application came back as unsuccessful. I put my stuff in storage and rode on with the show.

### IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN

Travelling with a lower-carbon footprint involves not only taking the road less travelled, as Robert Frost's

poem goes, but also taking the bike less lightweight, packing the bags most bulky, and, compared with driving, spending the time much lengthier.

I've had my Dawes Horizon, Bikey, for about 18 years. Others have come, fallen apart, and one even lost an argument with a Volvo, but Bikey has remained a constant. I considered adding a dynamo to reduce how often I plugged my electronics into the mains, but was concerned that my average speed of 8mph wouldn't generate sufficient power. Instead, I took solar panels that folded like an A4 hardback. I set off in August's heatwave, with solar power and then some, but it was worrying seeing the roadsides of the South-West and the Midlands lined with bleached grass and frazzled willowherb looking like fish skeletons. Later, during rainy days, I did charge indoors.

I filled a quarter of a pannier with prescription meds for niggling chronic conditions. An underactive thyroid makes me intolerant to cold, so I also packed my dad's 1968 Norwegian woolly jumper. Its age was showing, so I repaired one elbow with a Cycle Touring Festival patch, and sewed a cuff from an old glove around the jumper's unravelling one.

One piece of advice I'd give for planning a tour