CYCLING CLIMBS OF THE TOUR DE YORKSHIRE RIDE 2020

THE ROADS THAT MAKE THE EVENT

BY SIMON WARREN
With climbs of various degrees of severity dotted along its three different parcours, the 2020 Tour de Yorkshire Ride will present a challenge to all entrants.

To begin the day you’ve the tough little climb of Church Lane that directs you north as you exit Leeds into the Yorkshire Dales. Passing Eccup Reservoir you make your way to the second significant obstacle of the day up to North Rigton. Unfortunately those on the short route miss out on the nasty finale that rears up through the village. Next the course then undulates all the way to Penny Pot Lane which rises gently but consistently for nearly four kilometers.

Passing the imposing sight of RAF Menwith Hill with it’s array of famous white domes you ride into Dacre Banks and the base of the fearsome Hartwith Bank. As soon as you cross the River Nidd the road ramps up and you’ll be changing gear rapidly to cope with the severity of the gradient. There is a brief pause as you cross the B6165 then you’re right back into the stiff climbing. This is a proper tough hill which climbs on a double digit gradient for close to a kilometre before you can relax. Thankfully the next part of the ride is predominantly downhill all the way through Aldfield to the B6265.

With 60 kilometres in the legs it’s time to turn and head home across the beautiful Pateley Moor. Undulating upwards this long gentle climb ends with a short and dramatic descent into Pateley Bridge where you arrive at the showpiece of the day, the mighty Greenhow Hill.

This climb comes at you in waves, a barrage of stiff ascents with slight pauses in between that will have you on the ropes by the time you finally reach the summit. Psychologically you know the worst is now behind you but don’t drop your guard just yet because there’s still plenty of perils to come. In between Greenhow and Ilkley there are a bounty of nasty little lumps to contend with. The climb up from Thruscross reservoir, the horrible kick up Shepherd Hill out of Blubberhouses (which I guarantee will draw an expletive) and then to compound these the climb of Snowdon Hill over Askwith Moor. Once these have been tackled there’s a plunge into Ilkley to take on the ‘Cow and Calf’. Rising from the centre of town, never too steep but always hard this wonderful road takes you to the top of the ridge before you drop immediately back down into Otley.

Up next is Chevin Bank which is bad enough with fresh legs but with tired ones it forces all time and space to grind to a halt. If you reach the summit with your morale still intact then I take my hat off to you, it’s something I have never managed to do. Beat this and you’ve just the last 15 kilometres of undulations through the city to contend with before the grand finish on The Headrow.
**FACTFILE**

**RIGTON HILL**

Length: 1925m
Height Gain: 96m
Average Gradient: 5%
Maximum Gradient: 16%
Approx Climb Time: 6mins

**TOP TIP**

Those of you riding the short route will miss the true delights of this climb which requires one all out effort to smash the steep last 200 metres.

**RATINGS**

The climbs are all given a rating out of ten, ten being the toughest and you may notice the scores of some have changed from their appearance in my previous books. This is because I’m rating them in the contest of the event, so naturally Greenhow Hill now gets a 10, instead of a six as it had previously held. The rating is an amalgamation of gradient, length, the likely hostility of the riding conditions, and the condition of the surface.

**MAP KEY**

- A Road
- B Road
- Minor Road
- Rail line
- Hill route
- Town
- Scale

**LEGEND**

Understanding the Factfile and Ratings

On each factfile you will see a small colour coded graphic of the three Tour de Yorkshire Ride routes. On that graphic, highlighted in white you will also see the location of each particular climb. You can use this to see which climb appears on which route and whereabouts on that route it appears. All routes contain three of the climbs but only the long route features all ten.

Each Factfile includes a brief tip to help you get to the top of it in the best shape, together with the climb’s key statistics and of course the map to show where the climb starts and finishes. Also is the approximate time needed to ride each hill, timed over the distance marked, this time will be slow for some but fast for others, so see how you fair.
To kick start the day and drag you out of Leeds is the climb of Church Lane, the first of a number of undulations packed into the initial 12 kilometers on all the routes. After the rapid decent from the start line, and the short journey along Meanwood Road you will reach the base after just four kilometres. It’s always good to have a hill near the start to wake the body up, nothing too harsh, just something to get the system working properly. Running parallel to Stonegate Road this quieter route takes you up the same ridge climbing away from Headingley through the borough of Meanwood. Stretching from the right hand corner are close to 700 metres of incline averaging a reasonably stiff six percent with the toughest slopes right down the bottom. This first ramp will feel like a bucket of cold water in the face this early in the day, but it’s only short and the rest of the climb is a breeze, up to and past the mini roundabout.

**FACTFILE**

**TOP TIP** The harsh start to this climb is the wake up call your legs need, just click down the gears to get through it, then change back up when it eases off.

- **LENGTH** 675m
- **HEIGHT GAIN** 42m
- **AVERAGE GRADIENT** 6.2%
- **MAXIMUM GRADIENT** 11%
- **APPROX CLIMB TIME** 2mins

**INCLUDED ON**

- **SHORT**
- **MEDIUM**
- **LONG**
Although this climb appears on all three routes, only those riding the two longer ones get to experience its killer finish through the village of North Rigton. You’ll all arrive at the base where Dunkeswick Lane crosses Swindon Beck then you begin to climb ever so gently to meet the A658. Take care crossing here then continue on the steady incline to where the road kinks left and the gradient starts pick up. As you pass the sign for North Rigton the slope eases back significantly and you can cast your eyes left to enjoy the view, your reward for the gain in altitude. As you reach the mini roundabout those on the short route will head left and everyone else heads right, and up. Ahead you see the slope rear skyward between the houses, a steep, narrow path just waiting to hurt your legs. This is the first real test of the day, short enough to tackle in one big effort and a good test to make sure your legs are primed for bigger beasts still to come.
Following on from the nasty ramp up through North Rigton and the brace of small peaks that follow it you drop down the A6161 to the junction with Penny Pot Lane. This long seemingly benign road, running parallel to the A59 climbs at such a steady rate to begin with you will hardly notice it, but trust me, you are heading up hill. Just past the recycling centre is where you’ll begin to notice a difference and feel the need to change down a sprocket or two as your forward progress begins to slow slightly. This is the meat of the climb, but rather than prime filet it’s still more corned beef with a maximum gradient of just 4%. You can’t knock its length though as the slope continues it’s upward progression continually shielded by trees either side. On and on, a perpetual arrow straight line heads painstakingly upwards until finally it fades as you pass the entrance to the wind farm on your right.

**FACTFILE**

**TOP TIP** To tackle this road is simply a case of finding the right gear and cadence and sticking to it.

| LENGTH | 3425m |
| HEIGHT GAIN | 73m |
| AVERAGE GRADIENT | 2.1% |
| MAXIMUM GRADIENT | 4% |
| APPROX CLimb TIME | 11 mins |

**INCLUDED ON**

- SHORT
- MEDIUM
- LONG
Here we have the first proper climb of the day and it’s a real beast, rising up from the River Nidd, through Summerbridge and all the way to the top of Brimham Moor. From the first bend, and for the entirety of the first half of the climb, it’s an out of the saddle, wishing it would end, lung-busting effort. This is no surprise really – if you look at the Ordnance Survey map you’ll see there are four gradient arrows on this stretch. Rising hard up and out of the village, the road becomes even steeper into the woods, the narrow path swaying left and right in the darkness under the shelter of trees. It’s an eternity until you see a light at the end of the tunnel and a possible lessening of the slope. Yes the sky opens, but unfortunately the climb remains remorselessly steep for just that little bit longer. Eventually it abates, allowing you to pedal out the easier second half up to the T-junction. Welcome to Nidderdale.

**FACTFILE**

**TOP TIP** The first real test of the day will require a small gear and plenty of grunt out of the saddle, and don’t go too hard right away, the very steep section lasts quite a while.

**LENGTH** 1500m
**HEIGHT GAIN** 137m
**AVERAGE GRADIENT** 9.1%
**MAXIMUM GRADIENT** 20%
**APPROX CLIMB TIME** 7 mins

**INCLUDED ON** SHORT MEDIUM LONG
Here’s the big one, the infamous Greenhow Hill, and your first chance to claim the King or Queen of the mountain jersey. No stranger to the Tour de Yorkshire Ride on a bitterly cold day it will give you a true lesson in what it’s like to climb Yorkshire’s hills. The pain comes in bursts over four distinct stretches of climbing, with brief respites in between. Attack each hard section, get your breath back, and then attack the next.

Heading west through Pateley Bridge the road, which will be closed for the day, rears up viciously past the pub and out of town. This opening stretch of 18% gradient is evil, then it plateaus slightly before hitting the second hard ramp which peaks at 16%. Drag yourself through the woods to reach the third and longest section of climbing which is ever so slightly easier at 15%. The fourth and final ramp delivers you to the top of the moor where you finish at the sign for Greenhow village.

**FACTFILE**

**TOP TIP** This is a long and very hard climb so don’t burn all your matches at the bottom. After each hard ramp, take a drink, recover, then get stuck in again.

**LENGTH** 3990m

**HEIGHT GAIN** 282m

**AVERAGE GRADIENT** 7%

**MAXIMUM GRADIENT** 18%

**APPROX CLIMB TIME** 16mins

**INCLUDED ON** SHORT MEDIUM LONG
Once through Blubberhouses and across the A59 you’ll be heading generally uphill for the next five kilometers all be it in three stages, the final of which is this testing ramp to the top of Askwith Moor. The sign on the approach warns of a 12% gradient which might undersell it to be honest, it feels and looks much steeper in places. Dip down to gather some momentum past the lone house on the right and Dick’s Beck on the left then as the road bends to the right the steepest slopes kick in. Whatever momentum you had soon evaporates as the road rises rapidly up towards the top of the Moor. Twisting a little but predominantly straight the brow ahead is never out of sight, however once reached you realise this is just the end of the toughest section and not the top. The remainder of the climb is gentle though and when you do reach the summit you are treated with fantastic views to the left and to the right across the open moor.
One of the best spectator spots on the route this climb will be thick with fans when you arrive, all in high spirits, especially if they have been to the Inn at the top. The name Cow and Calf comes from the giant rocks that perch on the side of the moor, which legend says resemble a cow and her calf. I don’t see it myself – no doubt the story was devised over a few pints. But anyway, to the climb. Beginning on Cowpasture Road, the slope is quite steep and dead straight as it rises out of town. Following a slight kink and a tiny plateau, the scenery changes and the gradient picks up a touch. To your right is now moorland and you’ll just catch sight of the imposing rocks, a natural playground for climbers who stand watch as you suffer on the 12% slopes. Dead ahead the Inn pops up over the horizon – focus on this as once you pass it’s all over.
Chevin Bank is part of the cycling fabric in this part of Yorkshire, however, I have never documented it any of my books for the simple reason that it’s pure torture. It is evil, relentless, and coming towards the end of this ride will be the witness to much colourful language. Leaving the centre of Otley it ramps up over the A660, kinks left and then settles into the unforgiving gradient set on a wide and dead straight road. The lack of deviation can be a mind killer on such a long slope as whenever you look up you won’t seem to have travelled any further. A slight kink greets you at roughly half way but it’s only a single degree then it continues up under the cover of trees through Otley Chevin Forest Park. Here the road snakes a little, twisting left then right as the gradient finally begins to recede and you reach the summit where you can shout “Thank (insert word of your choice) for that”.

**FACTFILE**

**TOP TIP** Drop down to your smallest gear, don’t ever look more than 20 metres in front of you and just grind it out whilst reminding yourself it will all be over soon.

| **LENGTH** | 1750m |
| **HEIGHT GAIN** | 164m |
| **AVERAGE GRADIENT** | 9.4% |
| **MAXIMUM GRADIENT** | 12% |
| **APPROX CLIMB TIME** | 8mins |

INCLUDED ON

| SHORT | MEDIUM | LONG |
Ride them all.