

Day 16                      24th June 2017  
Past Atlantic City to Wamsutter

150.7k / 93.6miles

1077m / 3533ft (1385m / 4543ft descent)  
32.5%↑ 43.4%↓ 24.1%→ 14.4% max

*If it was easy they would call it football*



This was definitely one of the most memorable days of the whole trip. Not necessarily in terms of scenic views, distance travelled or even height gained, more because of the potentially really rather sticky situation in which I found myself.

I have alluded to the fact that I was more apprehensive about this section than any other – even camping out in bear country did not feature as high on my radar.

I say that for the following reasons:

- The new route went completely off the ACA map
- There was literally nothing for miles in any direction
- Stories about water resources being very scarce abounded
- Internet research confirmed c above!

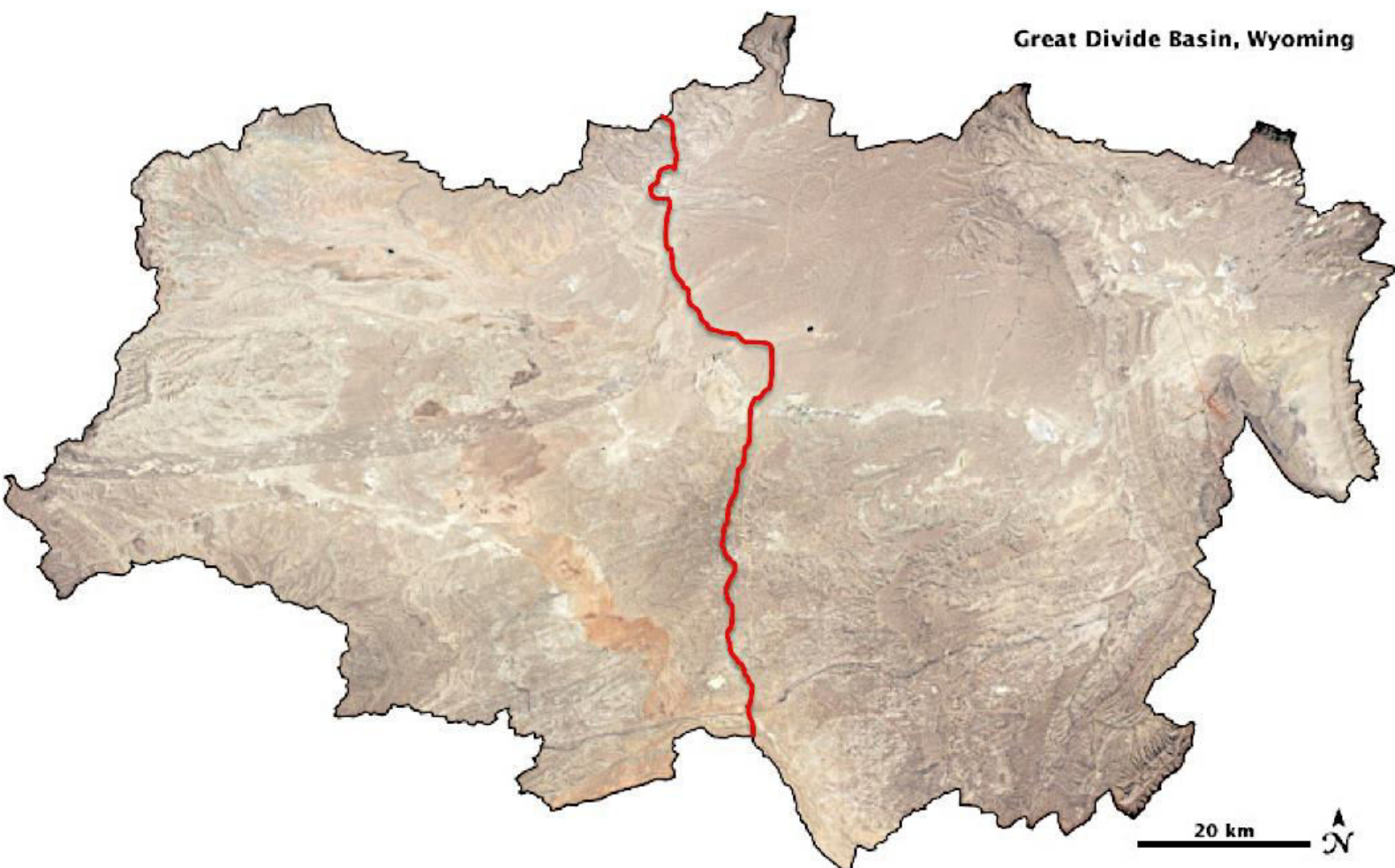
Fear is not the right term here - apprehension is correct. This is because, to my mind at least, fear implies helplessness and the unknown, both features which were not applicable here.

I say that because I knew what I was potentially letting myself in for and considered that I had taken steps to successfully militate and/or mitigate against any major mishaps.

Furthermore I was reassured by my previous experiences on the trail to date; Fleecer Ridge was not nearly as daunting as implied in the various journals I'd read and similarly negotiating the Lava Trail was tough but not as tough as it had been portrayed.

So I told myself that it was entirely possible that, in reality, the Basin would not be that bad as feared and that I would be able to look back on the day's trip as being a bit of an anti-climax.....

*Route across the Basin showing complete lack of population, roads and incidentally water*





I was packed and ready early, intending to make reasonable distance before the heat of the day kicked in in earnest.



*The Basin!!*



I was now onto ACA map 4, but the TD race route runs essentially north–south and transits through Wamsutter and this is some 60k+ to the west of the ACA route which swings round near the edge of the Basin and passes runs through Rawlins. So the map is superfluous for this section.

*Diagnus Well, last reliable water for 120k*





First stop was at Diagnus Well, a water pipe standing incongruously in the middle of the desert. The GPS routed me directly to the spot which was reassuring. I topped up the bottles to the max and set off for the turning onto the Wamsutter North Bypass (catchy name).



*Lots of scenes of essentially nothing.*



I did see the occasional spot of colour in the otherwise featureless tracts.

I am not much of a botanist but though these plants were worthy of a picture or two

57k into the day I turned right onto the Bison Basin Bypass.

This sent me down an unmarked trail and commenced a 3k climb which the route directions describe as:

*'potentially challenging in strong SW winds'*





It was fortunate that, unlike yesterday, there were no strong winds. Things were going well.



It was about here that I started to suspect that my rear tyre was a little spongy.

I wasn't totally sure but gave it a few pumps to top it up anyway. I also noticed tyre wall seemed darker in colour in places – odd.

*Topping out on a butte looking south*



Having reached the top of the climb I looked south. I had to take an indistinct track left and identify a rusty pole. The route instructions here state:

*The Bison Rim Trail will be quite faint at times for the next 1.5k.  
Use the force and keep to centre of ridge*

Nothing better than clear directions I always say!



*Spot the route!*

I made sure that I assiduously followed the line on my GPS.

The good news is I found the route no problem and, after a hike a bike section, progressed well along the cliff edge shown in the photo below. I was starting to enjoy myself.



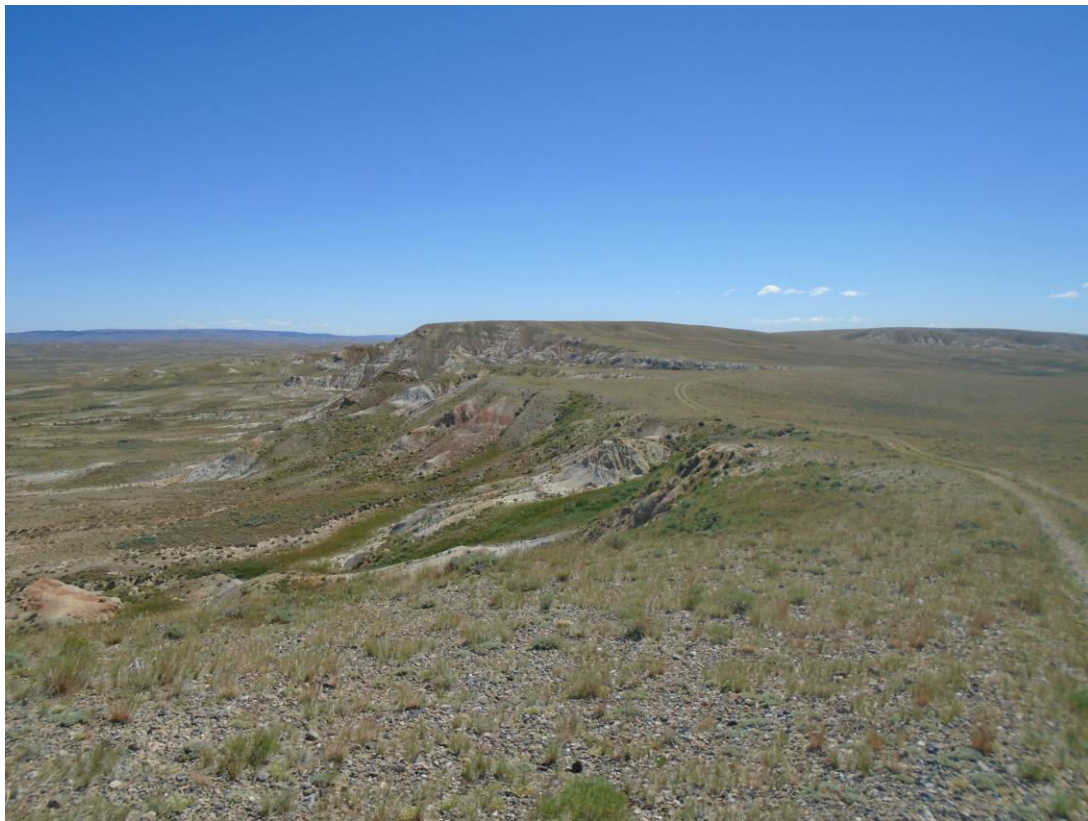
*Looking north to the Crooks Mountain Range, about 50miles away*

It appeared my misapprehensions about the Basin were to prove unfounded...

However in true TD fashion things rapidly started to go pear shaped.

It became readily apparent that my rear

tyre was not holding pressure and the dark staining was increasing significantly.



*Clear view of route along top of escarpment.*

I deduced that this was not a good thing!

No worries..... I had several spare charges of 'Stans no leaks' fluid, and the applicator with me; but wait a minute I had already charged the tyre yesterday in Pinedale and shaking the wheel gave the usual reassuring sloshing sound. So there was obviously still free fluid in the tyre. Then I realised that the dark staining appeared to be Stans itself leaking through the tyre wall – never heard of that before. I was not sure why it was occurring.



Never mind I had a spare inner tube – but wait another minute I didn't did I because the super glue leakage right at the start of this trip had rendered the inner tube useless and because I 'obviously' had enough Stans I had not replaced it had I?<sup>1</sup>

I could repair a rip in the tyre wall no problem – the only problem was I didn't have a rip in the side wall; just a generalised ooze of sealant through the wall. On reflection this is what I first noticed in my camp just past Lima<sup>2</sup> on day 11.

I was potentially getting into deep sh\*t here. I was at least 40k away from the Diagnus Well; the last know water point and furthermore that was back from whence I had come.

There was the potential for water at a solar well I had identified from satellite images back home. This was about 20k away but I did not know if this was operating. Wamsutter was about 80k away as well.

Humm... interesting.

First thing to do was to sit down and think this through... after all as we used to say in the army *'If you couldn't stand a joke you shouldn't have joined'*

I had about 4L of water and obviously other TD riders would be along sometime, assuming of course I was on the correct route – and I was pretty sure I was. So I was unlikely to die in the imminently near future.

As I could not immediately repair the tyre I chose to pump it up at increasingly frequent intervals and continue onwards at a slower pace in the vain hope that by going easier on the bumps I would be less likely to cause the fluid to leak.



*Not a smiley face on this phot for some reason!!*

1. See comment in 4<sup>th</sup> paragraph, page 3, Day -1
2. See comment in 3<sup>rd</sup> paragraph, page 7 Day 11



*Limping along the Bison Basin Rim trail*

I duly arrived at the solar well, a j shaped linear arrangement of cattle troughs leading from a solar powered standpipe.



*My none  
functioning  
solar well  
oasis*

It was dusty, disconnected, disused and deserted. I was disgusted!!

Damm!      nothing for it but to continue.



I stopped and charged the tyre with more Stans fluid, but all that really did was completely deflate the tyre; meaning I had to reflate it again from scratch. It did however at least ensure that the Stans in the tyre would not run out completely.



As I progressed south, pumping the tyre increasingly often, the trail improved and I saw my first oil well<sup>1</sup>.

### *First oil well*

However the improved road was still deserted and my rear tyre situation was deteriorating fast. I reckoned I probably had enough water with me although I was rationing my consumption somewhat, and in reality probably not drinking enough.

*Bison Basin / Hadsell Road sign.  
At least I knew where I was even if it  
wasn't on the map!*

Unexpectedly I came across a functioning solar well, this one was mounted on a trailer and theoretically moveable or at least it would have been, had it not been cemented it in situ.

I elected not to use it however as there was a huge dead steer there too. The corpse was in the classic cartoon position - legs in the air with swollen (about to burst abdomen). It was immediately adjacent to the water – not actually in it but the flies were prestigious. I moved on.

I then saw my first sign of life, a vehicle in the far distance was leaving a dust trail. I was in all likelihood not going to die!! Normally cyclist dislike vehicle dust trails; in this case I was relatively happy



*Dust trail in the distance*

1. Apparently in Wyoming there is one oil well for every 20 people. This a reflection of the sparse population and the large number of oil wells. Oil well and good you might (or might not) say but that didn't really help me.

It zoomed past – I had elected not to stop it

- a. because it was going in the opposite direction
- b. because I reckoned I had enough water
- c. I reasoned that if all else failed I could walk the next 25k+ to Wamsutter and regroup. I didn't want my Trackleaders lozenge to change consequent upon my having accepted outside help.



*Busy oil service road to Wamsutter*

However, later in the afternoon, I did stop one truck because I had found a clipboard lying on the trail which contained a list of names and represented a work sheet for about 50 guys associated with running the oil field.

The driver was grateful but didn't offer me any fluid which I thought a bit off.

Anyway in the far distance I spotted a tower which, as I inched my way towards it. It turned out to be Wamsutter's water tower and seemed to take an age to reach.

I was too relieved / tired to take a photo. Nevertheless it was a very pleased TD rider who literally limped into Wamsutter on a wing and a prayer. Despite having pumped it up at least 20x in the last 10k my rear tyre was essentially as flat as a pancake for the last 500m.

I came upon a Subway with a TD bike outside. I went in to lick my wounds and get some fluid. Rich was there. He confirmed that there was no bike mending facilities in the metropolis that is Wamsutter. He said that there was a motel where he was staying on the other side of the main road and that several others were there but he was not sure of there were any spare rooms available.



Given the way the day had panned out I was pretty sure I knew the answer to that one.

I mentioned the clip board; he said he had seen it but had not picked it up - to tired!!

As he left to check in I stayed and had a 12' sub and a quiet sit down for a while, glad to be back in 'civilisation'

I walked the (unrideable) bike the 500m to the motel and asked about accommodation. They had 1 room left - things were looking up.

I said that if anyone else came into town on a bike looking for a room I would be happy to have them share with me (my good Samaritan act; while at the same time potentially halving the room cost). As it was I was the last chap in that day so if I not been able to progress out there, no one would have come across me until at least tomorrow

Rich had told the gang who were staying at the motel about my situation and the whole community grouped around and we discussed my predicament.

It transpired that. despite their combined experience running tubeless, this was a situation they had not come across before. I have to say at the time I did not find this fact encouraging. We jointly agreed that it seemed that the tyre wall had become porous – possibly due to wear.

Re charging the tyre and pumping it up +++ was deemed the most appropriate and indeed only action, with the tyre left overnight horizontal on a bin to see if it stayed up.

Quite what should be done if this did not work was left unsaid.

Using a 29" inner tube was suggested but only as a throwaway line. Obviously it would not work with a 27.5" tyre...

After all this excitement I washed my kit and left it to dry in the dying sun and went to bed, hopeful that I / we had successfully rectified the situation.

An interesting day and one which will stay with me for some time....