

## Slow down - various levels of slow travel

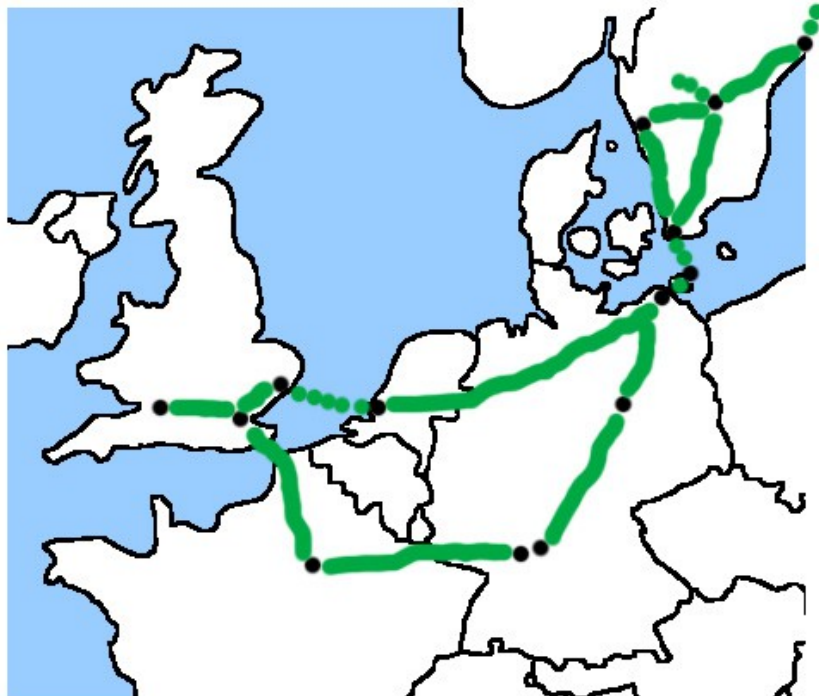
### 1. Getting around Europe without a plane

*On 17 April 2017, I was one of two speakers at a Climate Friendly Bradford on Avon meeting about slow travel. My focus was on overseas travel without taking a plane. One of the journeys I talked about at the Climate Friendly BoA event was a trip to Sweden I had made the year before, by a combination of trains and ferries.*

Getting to Sweden took me about 48 hours, with, along the way, views of two of the Wiltshire white horses and of two other pipe smokers on board the Harwich to Hoek van Holland night ferry, a brief stroll through Amersfoort, views of the Porta Westfalica and its surrounding hillside and of the urban landscape of central Hamburg, an overnight stay in Stralsund, and a smooth, sunny ferry crossing from Sassnitz to Trelleborg. A couple of days later I continued to Stockholm, about 5½ hours by train from Trelleborg.

*(extract from my article “Visit to Friends in Sweden”, published in the July 2016 newsletter of Bradford on Avon Quaker Meeting)*

*Altogether, I travelled for about 3 weeks, including visits to family and friends in Germany. Here's the route I took:*



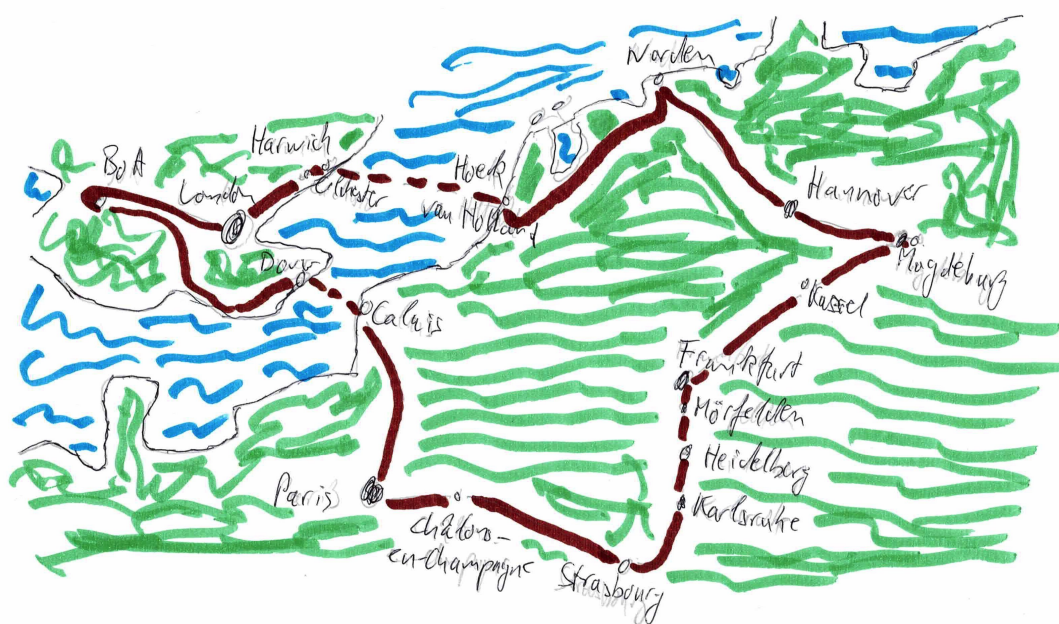
## 2. Getting around Europe without a plane or high-speed train

*In July 2023 I visited Germany for the first time in 5 years. This time I set myself an additional challenge. Rather than just giving air travel a miss, I decided not to take any high-speed trains either.*

On the whole, I quite liked the experiment of not taking any really fast trains. Most of the time, I just bought my ticket before I headed off. I didn't have to worry about catching a particular train, and compared to previous trips, this one was a bit more relaxing and more interesting, as I was travelling through all kinds of smaller places I don't normally get to see. Most of all, it felt beautifully old-fashioned, and this feeling was much enhanced by the fact that I combined my holiday with a 3-week digital detox: not checking any e-mails and not going on the internet (with the possible exception of that ticket machine in Norden). My digital detox was unintentionally made more complete when the digital camera I had taken with me died – which happened before I had reached Germany.

And so I can't furnish you with the following image, as I didn't capture it with a camera: As I was looking out of my ferry cabin at Hoek van Holland port, I saw, on the left, the container ship Stena Transporter, full of those containers that are so essential to keep our lifestyles going and to keep us furnished with a lot of things (mostly things we don't need). On the right was a whole series of wind turbines, symbolising a more sensible approach by harvesting natural renewable resources to furnish us with electricity (that we use mostly for things we don't need). In between, the water that can happily exist without us. And framing it all in an arc was the most intense and longest-lasting rainbow I've ever seen. It remained there for a solid quarter of an hour, after which it faded extremely slowly.

*(extract from my article “Adventures of a slow international traveller (Level 2)”, published in the September 2023 newsletter of Bradford on Avon Quaker Meeting)*



### 3. Cycling

*Cycling is my usual way of travelling to places that are a bit too far to walk to (like the 9-mile journey between my home and central Bath). In August 2017 I spent a few days exploring cycle routes around Wiltshire.*

In August I spent several days exploring other parts of the cycle network. I started off on the already familiar route 4 from Bradford on Avon to Devizes (along the canal towpath), then, after a lunchbreak, continued on this route - now on quiet country roads - via Pewsey to Wootton Rivers. It only took me 5 hours (including lunchbreak and at a gentle pace), a lot quicker than I expected. The following day saw an even shorter ride. I continued along route 4 to Great Bedwyn and Little Bedwyn, then took route 254 to Ramsbury and from there on to Marlborough. Only 3 hours this time, although a little bit exhausting towards the end, as the road from Ramsbury to Marlborough went up and down all the time - not too steep though.

The third day was the most scenic section. I started off on route 482, the Marlborough and Chiseldon Railway Path. Like the Bristol to Bath path, it was built along a disused railway line, but it's mostly non-tarmaced. It's a nicely sheltered route, surrounded by trees most of the time, so that the noise of the parallel-running A-road from Marlborough to Swindon is rarely noticed. At the end of route 482, I made almost a U-turn onto route 45, another mostly traffic-free route that follows part of the Ridgeway. It offers stunningly wide views, but the terrain is sometimes challenging. Even with a mountain bike, I would have had to push the bike for a mile or two - with my old-fashioned town bike, there was no question of even trying to ride it through this part of the route. Towards the bottom of the hill, I joined route 403 to Avebury. This goes right past the standing stones, so I took the opportunity to wander around a bit and visit the pub before continuing along route 403 into Calne, the final stopover on the journey.

*(extract from my article "Exploring the National Cycle Network", published in the September 2017 newsletter of Bradford on Avon Quaker Meeting)*





#### 4. Walking

*As a carless person (since 2006), I walk quite a bit, as this is my usual way of getting around. It does, on rare occasions, happen that I accidentally cover a walking distance of half a marathon in a day. However, 'proper' long-distance walks are something I have almost never ventured into. My first feeble attempt at doing so was in August 2022 when I embarked on the final 30 miles of the Wayfarers Walk in Hampshire - which I decided to walk in 2 days. So I travelled by train (the last leg from Alton by steam train) to Alresford, then walked from there to Emsworth, with an overnight stay in Soberton. Here and there, I deviated quite a bit from the official route (which wasn't always easy to find), so I probably covered closer to 40 miles during those two days.*



*Here are some pictures from along my journey:*



