

### WALI TAYLOR

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Photographing this path was something of a pilgrimage for me. I had planned to ride to the Alexander Stadium for a morning session during the Commonwealth Games, but instead I ended up in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital unable to walk with a herniated disk.

The A34 Cycleway route starts near the city centre at the end of Vesey Street in the Gun Quarter. For much of the journey I was in a dedicated two-lane blue-painted track. I decided to use my 1910 Ariel Cycle to ride the route I had intended doing in August 2022. The bike is a beautiful thing with a very high stance and, as it is a lady's machine, I can step through the frame, which is useful as my leg is still a bit wonky. We managed all inclines even though the Ariel is single geared and my peddle power is diminished due to the injury.

After passing through Newtown we crossed Six Ways, Aston, and at one point there were eleven lanes if you include the cycleway. Just after we met the elevated section of the A34 the dedicated path ends abruptly and road signs indicate that cyclists should use the bus lane. I stayed on the pavement with the pedestrians.

At the refurbished Perry Barr Rail Station I was ordered to dismount. However, shortly after, an obviously new bright blue section of double lane cycle path, 100 metres long, appeared and then quickly disappeared outside the OneStop Shopping Centre. There were still signposts telling me to cycle on. Then I was directed to take a narrow strip alongside the main carriageway, which I declined and stuck to the footpath pushing towards the Stadium. It was, of course, closed and I was alone apart from a Ukrainian athlete who ran past me but shortly came back and asked how she could get to run on the track. I did think about telling her that, to do that, she needed to train hard every day. But I just smiled and told her that I was not sure.

I was under the impression that the Cycleway was built to coincide with the Commonwealth Games, but I am no longer convinced as the route tapers out a good mile short leaving you more and more exposed to the traffic of the A34.

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