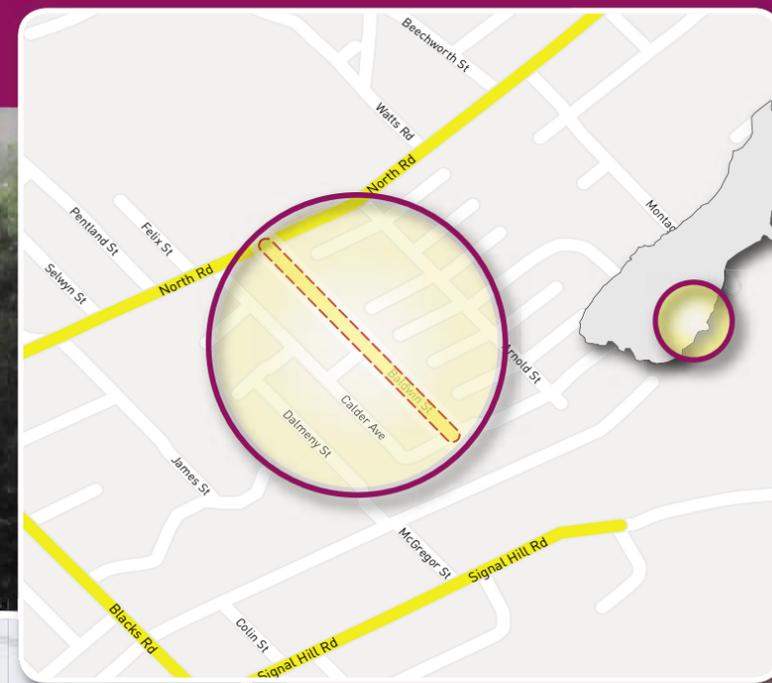




I HATE...
 The boy racers who rag their souped-up cars up here

I LIKE...
 Watching the tourists in campers who soon think better of trying to emulate the boy racers

Hugh grimaces — he was zig-zagging soon after



WHERE IS IT?
 Baldwin Street is 3km north-east of Dunedin city centre, directly off North Road, a major arterial route. Dunedin is New Zealand's fifth largest city and sits on the south-east coast of the country's South Island.

- BALDWIN STREET FACTS**
- 161.2 metres long
 - 52 to 99m altitude
 - 47.22m of climbing
 - Average: 1 in 3.41 (29.33%)
 - Maximum: 1 in 2.86 (34.96%)

MY PERSONAL BEST
 Just getting up it is enough!

Riding it

The steepest?

IS Baldwin Street really the steepest street in the world? You have to suspect not — there must, for instance, surely be steeper streets in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro or the Chilean city of Valparaiso. Even Britain's steepest public road, at Harlech Castle, comes close to Baldwin Street with a maximum gradient of one in 2.91. One of the problems in determining the world's steepest street is that the figures (like all statistics) are iffy. While previous measurements had Baldwin Street's maximum gradient at 38 per cent, the most recent *Guinness Book of Records* entry says 35 per cent. Going by this figure, a steeper street exists in Pittsburgh. According to the city's Department of Engineering and Construction, Canton Avenue in the suburb of Beechview reaches 37 per cent. Chances are there's an even steeper stretch of un-surveyed road in some backwater. But until the *Guinness Book of Records* updates this entry, who are we to argue with the late Norris McWhirter that Baldwin Street sits atop the pile?



Get some speed up

AFTER a quick hour's loop around some of Dunedin's mountain bike trails, it took me three cracks to get up Baldwin Street cleanly in one go. I'd like to blame the mud on my tyres or an absence of clipless pedals, but really I was twice defeated by the gradient. The first attempt saw me jab a foot down when my front wheel lifted off the ground. Although I got going again from an adjacent driveway I was far from satisfied at having topped the climb after being forced to make a stop. For take two I tried attacking the climb with more weight over the front end. My concern that the rear wheel might slip proved unfounded and the effort was going well until I got to the very steepest bit. Here my zig-zagging across the road had become so pronounced I inadvertently turned back down the hill! Rapidly losing height I did somehow manage to swing the bike back round again but I ended up in the gutter, rubbing against the kerb. This was just a little bit too much resistance. After two attempts I was knackered, but as Roy Castle said, dedication is what you need. Tackling Baldwin Street for the third time, I finally hit the nail on the head. Only then did I feel I had the right to part with \$2 (about 80 pence) for a naff certificate commemorating the achievement.



Subsidence could be an issue

KILLER CLIMB SPECIAL

Gladstone grovels up Baldwin St

I BE MOSTLY RIDING...
 A third-hand Kona Kikapu Deluxe. Travelling through the wild New Zealand landscape, I figured an mtb would serve me better than a road machine. Not on Baldwin Street, however. The low gears are useful, but the primitive dual suspension system adds weight and saps power.

BALDWIN Street, in the New Zealand city of Dunedin, has been listed by the *Guinness Book of Records* as the Steepest Street in the World. Signposts, guidebooks and the local tourist office are only too keen to trumpet Baldwin Street's unbelievable steepness. From the junction at the bottom, this straight residential road doesn't appear so bad. Houses line the pavements and it just looks like another of the city's unassuming suburban hills. But ride up its gentle lower section and you suddenly realise how steeply Baldwin Street rises.

One moment it's a gentle pedal; the next it's a death-or-glory fight. A change in the road surface marks the dramatic ramping up of the gradient. As it steepens and narrows, Baldwin Street demands as much effort from your upper body to keep the front wheel on

the ground, as it does from your legs to keep moving. Eventually, you have to resort to zig-zagging across the width of the road, watching out for the tourists, film crews and fitness freaks who also frequent the famous street.

Sorry Kiwis!

LIKE 10 metre-long cycle lanes and Birmingham, the savage gradient of Baldwin Street is an accident of city planning. Put simply, much of Dunedin was designed in London during the mid-19th century when

New Zealand still belonged to Britain. The result of imposing a grid system on some inaccurate contour maps literally gave rise to the world's steepest street. So, next time the evils of slavery and repression don't stand as a substantial enough argument against imperialism, take a ride up Baldwin Street.