

# CTC Fife & Kinross Newsletter, Spring 2013 edition.

## In this edition...

- Cyclocross 1<sup>st</sup> time
- The Joys of Cycle Camping
- Northern Ireland Tour
- Dead End Glens
- and much more



# Fife wheels



ISSUE 75

## Front Page photo.

No, it's not someone disappearing down one of Fife and Kinross's numerous deep pot-holes! It's Stuart Allan taking part in his first ever Cyclocross event (see article on page 9) Hopefully you haven't had to endure anything as wet (or as deep) as the cover shot this year. Early indications are that we are in for a drier year... but that wouldn't be hard, would it? If it proves to be correct we may be in danger of getting some decent touring in 2013 ! However (at the time of writing) Winter has returned with a vengeance... amazingly the corresponding week in 2012 saw the temperature rising to 21°C !

## Rendezvous meets.

So far this year there has been some great turnouts at the meets (Wednesdays and Saturdays). Perhaps the new look website has something to do with it? By using the Facebook part of CTC F&K's website some members have been posting their planned route to the Saturday meets, which in turn has led to members meeting en-route to cycle together to the meets. This has quite noticeably further increased the social aspect of our club, there's a real buzz just now.

## New (and re-cycled) ideas for 2013

**Dusk to Dawn....** there will be an overnight ride later this year (Sat. 22<sup>nd</sup> through to Sun.23<sup>rd</sup> June)... if you've never tried it before what better way to try it than in a group.. there is something really magical about picnicking in the dark and then cycling into the dawn.

It is being run on the weekend nearest the 'longest day' (more details later on page 10)

There has been a full moon arranged for that night. A little more difficult to arrange however will be the clear skies and good weather to take advantage of it... so keep the fingers crossed.

**Group Rides....** there will also be regular Group Rides (due to be held on Sundays throughout the Summer). The dates, format, starting points and distance of these rides have yet to be finalised... so keep checking the website regularly for announcements.

**The Five Ferries** ride will be held again later this year. The concept of the ride has always been popular, but because it is usually undertaken midweek, the numbers have always been small.

There has been a real effort made to hold it on a Sunday this year to open it up to those who have expressed an interest... timing of ferries permitting... and lo and behold, it turns out they are permitting! With a bit of tweaking and a few miles knocked off, it is possible (see pages 10 & 11)

**Any suggestions** for interesting rides or events are always welcome.... you need only to get in touch with a Committee member and the wheels will be set in motion... it really is that easy!

## Smooth Roads ??

"Like there are any of them left in Scotland" I hear you shout! Well I stumbled across one quite by chance the other day on the way to the Wednesday, Rouken Glen Garden Centre meet.

It is by far and away the nicest surface I've cycled on for many years and is to be found on the coast road to Hopeton House...what a pity it is such a short stretch. I have to admit it was very tempting just to cycle back and forward on it so that I could enjoy remembering what it was like when roads used to be smooth(ish). Don't all go cycling along it now and wearing it out!

Thanks again to the contributors of articles that have gone into the compilation of this newsletter.

Deadline for articles and photos to be included in the Summer newsletter is the last week in July.

Dougie Latto. Editor.



## Slightly Lost in Northern Ireland

by Stuart Allan

After an early start I found myself waiting on a delayed ferry at Troon terminal. The destination was Larne. Northern Ireland was a country I had long been waiting to cycle tour. The trip had been planned with my parents many years before, but abandoned due to a broken collar bone first week into the summer holidays. The new plan was to tour the country anti-clockwise, taking in sights and cities like the Giants causeway and Londonderry. Half way across the channel I had a shocking realisation though. I had forgotten the poles for my tent!

When the boat arrived I started on my way south to Belfast, with the plan to get a cheap tent. I took the fairly busy coastal route, stopping to watch an orange march as it passed along the Carrickfergus promenade. After that it was straight on into Belfast. After some time spent using the phones gps to find a shop in the busy city centre I succeeded. Luckily the shop had a fairly good tunnel tent on sale so I bought that, strapped it to the bike and headed north. Only passing one campsite on the way back I decided to wild camp at the side of a reservoir just outside Carrickfergus. **42 miles.**



My second days ride was an early start, woken by to passing walkers. I was heading for Portrush. Taking the inland route at first but soon realising the relatively flat and easy to navigate causeway coastal route would be better. The scenery further inland was excellent though. I stopped at the Giants causeway and the Carrick-a-Rede rope bridge along the way, both definitely worth a visit. When passing through Bushmills I got to see the Olympic torch being carried through the town. After a few wrong turns in and around Portrush I found a campsite. Busy with families and bursting with statics. But I didn't mind as I was just glad to get a hot shower. **75 miles.**

After a relatively long lie I continued my trip, first through Coleraine, then past the massive beach at Downhill. I turned off onto the hill road here. With a 20% climb to start of gave a good indication of what was about to follow. The views from the top of the hill were excellent, made better by the beautiful sunny weather. I started down the screamer of a descent on the other side then on to Londonderry. I got a little lost in Derry to be honest. The Olympic torch relay had moved onto here so I got to see it go past again. After getting some dinner in town I continued on, stopping to camp behind an old abandoned house a few miles out of town. **59 miles.**



When I woke the following day it appeared the fair weather had past. With the skies overcast I set off for Omagh, passing through Strabane and Newtonstewart on the way. Photo opportunities kept to a mere few due to the heavy prolonged rain. Nearing tea time I stopped at tourist information centre where I found a leaflet on campsites in the area. Luckily enough there was a site not far that took tents. A short but perilous trip along a fast and very wet dual carriageway brought me into Dungannon. I spent the night here, trapped in my tent by the continuing rain. **65 miles.**

Woken in the morning by rain still hitting the tent I lay waiting for it to stop. A few hours passed and I gave up hope of getting the tent away dry. With everything except the flysheet packed away dry in the panniers I set off. No sooner than I had set off the rain stopped. I left Dungannon heading for Omagh, then onto Newry. Accurate navigation was almost non-existent, due to the shockingly poor Collins map I had. Because of this most of the days riding was done on the dual carriageway hard shoulder cycle paths. Not far out of Newry I had to take shelter under a tree because of a monstrous downpour that seemed last forever. More than a bit damp I continued on towards the coast, first to Warrenpoint, then round the base of the Mourne mountains to a picturesque woodland site just outside Newcastle. **69 miles.**

For my last big days riding it was a wet start, the rain started around 6 and didn't stop all day. Within a few hours my gore-tex equivalent jacket was soaked through and my maps were all but useless sodden pulp. The plan was to head back to Larne taking the inland route avoiding Belfast. Most of the roads were fairly busy with spray everywhere from all the standing water. After a short stop at a Tesco in Antrim I took a more scenic route, only to go about 10 miles in sort of the wrong direction. I reached Carnfunnock country park site a few miles out of Larne around 7 soaked through and with a slightly damp tent from all the rain over the last few days.

**80 miles**



My first experience of Northern Ireland had been a good one with sun, sea and a few showers. N.I is definitely worth considering if you're planning on doing a tour somewhere, but if you're not keen on hills and fast drivers I wouldn't recommend it.

**Total distance 397 miles**

Date of tour 2nd to 8th June 2012

[More from Stuart later in this edition, ed.](#)



# WANTED



**FOR ATTEMPTING TO ESCAPE  
WITH EXTRA MERINGUES FROM A  
RECENT RENDEZVOUS MEET AT  
JIMMY AND JOYCE HAMILTON'S**

**\*REWARD\***

**FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO THE  
IDENTITY OF THIS UNKNOWN CYCLIST.**

As ever, the Rendezvous Meet at **Jimmy and Joyce's** was well attended by cyclists from all over Fife and Kinross.

The lure of the delicious meringues (that Joyce naughtily provides) proved just too much for the cyclists to resist... it didn't put them off at all from cycling on what was a cold and damp day.

This was noticeably the first time that CTC F&K's Facebook page had been used as a tool for like-minded members to meet up at a pre-agreed spot so that they could cycle (at least part of the way) as a group to the Rendezvous Meet.

Going from the banter at the meet it seems to have been a big success.

**Many thanks** to the Hamiltons for inviting us to their home and especially to Joyce for the hours she must spend making those trays and trays of meringues, and providing so much tea and coffee.

# Local roads to be designated as cycling and walking-friendly 'Green Routes'

A number of local roads are to be designated as 'Green Routes' in a bid to make them more attractive for cyclists and walkers.

The Perth & Kinross Council has looked at a similar scheme that has been successfully introduced on a number of rural routes in Clackmannanshire.

In Clacks speed limits have been lowered on a number of rural roads linking villages that were already being regularly used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. Speed limits on these roads were lowered to 40mph or 30mph, and signage was introduced warning motorists that they were likely to encounter cyclists and pedestrians on these routes.

It was found that the signing of these routes had a positive impact, and that cycling and walking increased significantly.

In Perth and Kinross, 16 routes will be used as a 'Green Routes' pilot project. Each route has been assessed and current speed limits recorded. The plan would see speed limits reduced to either 30mph or 40mph. Average speeds used by motorists on most of these routes are already well below the speed limit.

The roads where Green Routes will be introduced are: *(NB Our comments in brackets below)*

- U246 Middle Balado *(Access road only)*
- C494 between B9097 & A977 Balado *(Balado x-roads to start of Aldie Rd)*
- C494 between Powmill & B9097 *(Aldie Road)*
- U241 between A977 Drum & B9097 *(Road thro' Drum village)*
- U222 between U238 & A977 at Drum *(Local rd by Fossoway PS, Crook of D. to Drum)*
- U238 between Crook of Devon & U222 *(Ditto)*
- U237 between A823 & Crook of Devon *(Naemoor Road)*
- A823 spur between A823 & A977 *(Short section past Seamab school)*
- U223 between A997 & Gartwhinzean Feus *(Minor loop Sth of A977 Powmill to Blairingone)*
- U215 & U216 between Blairingone, Vicars Bridge & A977
- U213 between Blairingone & Easter Muirhead *(Minor road Sth of Blairingone)*
- U213 Easter Muirhead & Tethyknowe *(Ditto & left at Easter Muirhead)*
- C470 South Lochearnhead Road
- C450 South Loch Rannoch Road
- B846 North Loch Rannoch Road
- C484 Templehall to Kingoodie *(Near Invergowrie)*

Thanks to **David and Linda Gibson** for bringing this information to our attention.... I'm sure some of these roads are ones that you'll have cycled in the past and will hopefully be cycling again in the future.

Let us know if you do notice a difference in the behaviour of the motorists who share these roads with walkers and cyclists... it's always useful to give feedback (positive as well as negative) to Councils and Road-planners who are making an effort to provide facilities.



## Dead Ends

by Alec Robertson

Dave and Mary Goulder host an annual music weekend in the Achness hotel, Rosehall by Lairg. Wall to wall music sessions with a ceilidh on Saturday night, all performed by very talented and entertaining players, singers and dancers. We have been lucky enough to attend, not in the above talented category but joining in the choruses and laughing at the jokes. If you read this D & M thank you again!

This year, inspired by the good forecast, we altered travelling arrangements and took the bikes. The Achness hotel lies at the foot of Glen Cassley with an inviting strip of tarmac leading into the hills for a distance of 12 miles to Duchally, a deer farm. We had walked the first mile or two in previous years and had noted the potential for a bike run. Again on the good weather, cool or cold! with clear air and sunshine, we left on Thursday morning with the intention of adding two more "Dead Ends" to the itinerary, Strathconon on Friday, but today we would tackle the head of the Findhorn. Our starting point at about one o'clock was the Findhorn Bridge on the old A9, an interesting pentagonal concrete design. We parked on one of the pentagons, and set off into a stiff southwest breeze with the temperature still below zero. This made for a few difficult miles but as we got higher the shelter increased and we started to enjoy the well illuminated hills and icy river scenery. The camera was out regularly as the now amazingly flat strath snaked into the Monadhliaths. Among the attractions were the best Alder trees ever, but what could be a negative was the amount of dogs, evident from their barks and an array of well designed and well built kennels. We are very fond of dogs but these were ain't nothin' but hound dogs, barking all the time! We could easily remember this place as the "Glen of the Dogs" but they were overshadowed by the glory of the hills and the singing of the tyres as we sailed back down with the sun and wind behind us!



Under the Findhorn Alders

After some R&R and B&B in Inverness we took a monstrous route, but no Nessie and even the landlady wasn't bad, to Strathconon. We left the car above Loch Achonachie and set off hoping for the bright sunshine to return. It never quite did but the wind had dropped and it was still cold enough to freeze the waterfalls, not a euphemistic reference to bladder relief stops! The glen was spectacular nevertheless with more forest than we expected and certainly more inhabitants.

From the start we were in a tortoise and hare race with the post woman, the hare won, not before informing us that she had long since lost interest in counting, but there was probably more than two hundred people living in the Strath. The charming primary school was one of several interesting buildings, old and new through the middle part of the glen making a fine contrast to the hills. A frozen Loch Beannachan with giant drumlins, one topped with a decorative turret and views through to a very white Maoile Lunndaidh, 3295 ft, made a dramatic and impressive end to the tarmac. On the return, a chat with one of the 200+ inhabitants, a young mum out for the fresh air with her two year old, revealed that a small issue existed between local drivers and cyclists. She was an all round outdoors enthusiast and sister a keen club cyclist. She said that in the summer the road was popular with a variety of riders, up to and including racing, training and club runs, and they didn't always mix too well with the Chelsea Tractors and Estate Jeeps of the locals! I got that impression myself before she mentioned it, but no great problem!

After being entertained by a couple of Red Kites gingerly flying up and down the burn it was back to the car. A further detour through Ullapool and a visit to the Ceilidh Place, lovely ambience and wood burning stove but a long way to go for a cup of coffee! Up to Ledmore Junction and down the moor to Rosehall. Showered, fed, watered and entertained we were primed to crawl into bed, perchance to slumber and wake to the hotel breakfast and the next and final Dead End!

Saturday was another cold and varying day with the light improving and temperature rising slowly, as were we, with the strath only finding two or three hundred feet in the twelve miles to Duchally, another deer farm. Glen Cassley though is a bit of a classic escape of a bike run and our car count for the day was zero! Tractor count of two the only wheels witnessed. With no wind, serenity and solitude was the mood as we shared a lunch stop with 50 or so deer at the head of the glen.



**Stag Party**



**Hind Party !**

This was Eagle country but unfortunately our Eagle count was also zero, a couple of Buzzards were doing their best on the way back, but two Sparrowhawks and the aforementioned Kites were all the raptors we spotted in the three glens. What goes up usually comes down but with not a lot of up it was a longer way down, oxymoronicly, and back to the comfort and delights of the Achness hotel. The Saturday night ceilidh has an interesting format. The aforementioned highly talented are thrown together into pairs or threes, but sometimes slightly out of comfort zones by a simple raffle system. They perform between the dances and it certainly makes for a diverse and entertaining night!



**Strath Oykel**



**High Findhorn**

Perhaps being brought up on a diet of "round the loch" I have been averse to out and home runs, but I have slowly been convinced that back the same way is in fact acceptable, Glen Tilt was part of the convincing, but is not in this category, having a shortage of tarmac! Findhorn, Conon and Cassley I obviously would recommend, they are perhaps a slight departure, or three, for the typical "cycle tourist" and only twenty odd miles at a time but I think they are acceptable and collectable! So to a final thought, "Dead Ends", are alive and well!!! With apologies for that nugget of philosophy, go forth and collect some, I certainly hope to bag some more high glens, remember it's easy on the way back! There's some philosophy there as well, but I won't look too closely for it. *Alec Robertson*



After cycling for so long I was pretty sure I had heard of, as well as having tried quite a few of the many different forms of cycling. Unknown to me until late last year I had been missing out on what I now think is one the best, cyclocross. I discovered it for myself after reading a comment about it on the Kinross CCs facebook page. If you've never seen a cyclocross bike before it looks pretty much like a road bike with slightly bigger frame clearances for small knobby tyres and some differences in finishing kit. As with all aspects of cycling the bikes nowadays are more specialised than they used to be. But you could still make a cross bike using an old touring frame with similar tyre clearances. Cyclocross bikes are traditionally raced after the road racing season has finished but also make great all year round bikes. The racing is normally done on a circuit of about a mile or so in a park or field. Races normally last around an hour with riders having to negotiate obstacles like; hurdles, off camber descents, steep climbs and normally lots of mud. After investigating the sport a bit further and watching a few videos of the bikes in action I decided to order a cross bike for myself. Not purely with the intention of racing but for the practicality of a bike that is both fast on road and off. The proud owner of my new bike I headed out for a ride around Dunfermline and the surrounding area, taking in sections of road, woodland track and cycle path. The bike handled it all with ease and with that I was hooked. The combination of road bike speed and the go anywhere mountain bike ability was liberating.

After a few trips out getting used to riding the bike on different terrain I signed up for my first cyclocross race. On the morning of the race not knowing what to expect I packed my van and headed west to Paisley. The race was being held in a grassy hillside overlooking the town. Parking quite a bit away from the event I could hear the noise of the race commentator in the distance. With the rain coming down I made my way towards the noise. As I arrived at the race centre I found lots of bike shop vans, gazebos housing people warming up on rollers and the signing in station. Signed in and issued with my race number I readied myself for the race. It was a mass start with a good 40 people racing in my age category. Until that point I thought I had done some of my hardest cycling. I was quite wrong; the race seemed to last forever with no rest available when cycling in the rain through the long sodden grass and the deep rutted muddy sections. After the race was finished the sense of accomplishment was great, with all the riders standing in a group just past the finish line congratulating each other. The race was hard but great fun at the same time, I was amazed at the kind of terrain the bike could cope with at speed. As soon as I was home I signed up for some more events. With my first event in late October and finishing my last in early January I managed to race in 4 events all together. They happened on both sides of the country and ranged from fast flat courses to challenging coastline and hillside circuits. The most memorable moment was from a race in Irvine. The circuit had a large straight section that took you along the top of the beach, very tricky negotiating you're way through the deep rutted sand. My last and favourite race was in Bo'ness. The event had been well advertised, attracting a huge amount of riders as well as lots of spectators. This race saw a mass start of well over 100 riders all furiously making their way down the track after being set off by the loud crack of the starters gun.

After my races this season I'll definitely be back for more when they come around again. And in the mean time I'll be out on my cross bike as much as I can, taking advantage of Fifes many pathways and woodland tracks and roads.



# Upcoming Events



## DUSK to DAWN

A route of about 55 miles has been suggested for this Dusk to Dawn ride. This should be long enough, with breaks, to ensure that riders get the experience of riding into the dawn, but not so long as it might discourage too many from coming along. It will be a fairly lumpy route on minor roads.

If some wish to extend the ride into a 12 hour + they could ride to/from the start/finish. Any suggestions for stops on the trip are welcome... e.g. a traditional 'drum-up' at some point.

**Date- Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> through to Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> June** (longest day, full moon)

**Start/Finish Falkland, public car park. Time 22:00**

**Approx.route :-** Falkland - Kingskettle -Cults Hill - New Gilston - Peat Inn - Denhead - Pitscottie - Cupar - Rathillet - Hazelton Walls - Newburgh - Lindores - Collessie - Monimail - Bow of Fife - Ladybank - Freuchie - Falkland.

**Please check the Website for the finalised details of the Dusk to Dawn ride**



## Anyone for the "FIVE FERRIES" in 2013 ?

To allow more cyclists the opportunity to take part in the "5 Ferries" the ride is being held on a Sunday. The drawback of this is that there are fewer ferries... meaning a later first ferry.

That all sounds well.. a longer lie in bed is definitely a big bonus... but the knock on effect means there is no contingency plan should a ferry be missed, delayed or cancelled.

The average speed required to make each ferry is very relaxed to allow for this... but anyone considering cycling the "Five Ferries" should filter in that they should cycle faster than the average speed required just in case they encounter a 'mechanical'. It is far better to arrive at the Ferry Terminal early and wait, than arrive almost in time... only to see your ferry sailing away. It's also a good incentive for having your bike in good mechanical order! Don't let this put you off undertaking what is a great ride. It's much easier than it sounds as it consists of 5x cycles, none longer than 19 miles... and by the very nature of the trip there is a break from cycling on every ferry crossing... you can rest, feed, sleep, take photos... whatever you fancy until you arrive refreshed for the next leg.

**N.B. This is not a CTC led ride...** just an opportunity to join like-minded cyclists who may also be cycling the 5 Ferries on that day. Just turn up at Wemyss Bay in plenty of time to purchase your Hopscotch tickets for CalMac Routes 4 & 5... the rest is up to you (print off page 11 to take with you) **Dougie Latto**





## "5 FERRIES" (anti clockwise) SUNDAY 14th JULY, 2013.

Cycle 1 	<b>Ardrossan to Wemyss Bay</b> <b>0615 for 0815</b> (sailing 0845)	19 miles Suggest 0615 start for 8.5mph.av.	Park at Ardrossan, cycle to Wemyss Bay for 0815. This allows ½ an hr to purchase your Island Hopscotch tickets and board the 0845 ferry. Hopscotch Routes 4 + 5 covers all 5 ferries for £19.55 (£8.25 + £11.30)
Ferry 1	<b>Wemyss Bay to Rothesay, Bute.</b>	Depart 0815 Arrive 0920	Cafe on board for breakfast etc. (allowing for 10 mins to disembark ferry)
Cycle 2 	<b>Rothesay to Rhubodach</b> <b>(for 1040)</b>	9 miles in 1hr 10mins (total 28)	Average speed req'd for this <u>very flat</u> leg 7.7 mph
Ferry 2	<b>Rhubodach to Colintrave, Cowal.</b>	Depart 1040 Arrive 1045	No cafe on ferry.
Cycle 3 	<b>Colintrave to Portavadie</b> <b>(for 1345)</b>	19 miles in 3hrs (total 47)	Av. speed (without stops) on this <u>hilly</u> leg 6.4mph however breaks WILL be req'd. recommend Tighnabruaich (45mins of breaks leaves a managable 8.5 mph av.)
Ferry 3	<b>Portavadie to Tarbert, Kintyre.</b>	Depart 1345 Arrive 1410	No cafe on ferry.
Cycle 4 	<b>Tarbert to Claonaig</b> <b>(for 1620)</b>	12 miles in 2hrs 10min (total 59)	Av. speed req'd on this <u>hilly</u> leg 7.2 mph (allows for a ½ hour coffee stop in Tarbert)
Ferry 4	<b>Claonaig to Lochranza, Arran.</b>	Depart 1620 Arrive 1650	No cafe on ferry.
Cycle 5 	<b>Lochranza to Brodick</b> <b>(for 1920)</b>	15 miles in 2hr 30mins (total 74)	Average speed req'd on this <u>hilly</u> leg 7.5 mph (allows for a ½ hr + 'celebration' in Brodick)
Ferry 5	<b>Brodick to Ardrossan.</b>	Depart 1920 Arrive 2015	Cafe on board for meals etc.

- As there are fewer sailings it is essential that every ferry is met \*there is no contingency plan\* each rider is responsible for making the ferries on time.
  - N.B. the average speeds above are for guidance only and, unless indicated, without breaks.
  - Cycle 3 has been shortened by 9 miles (from 28 miles) to give an achievable average speed for this leg.
  - It would be prudent to have the means to pay for accommodation should a breakdown occur or a ferry is missed. It would also be prudent to check ferry times and possible delays with Cal Mac before leaving.
  - As in previous years you should be self-sufficient throughout the ride e.g. be able to make your own repairs, carry spares, pump and tools, foul weather clothing, sun screen, midge repellent, emergency rations etc.
  - If a ferry is missed it may (just) be possible to retrace your route, so carry up to date CalMac timetables.
  - You may wish to travel directly to Wemyss Bay rather than Ardrossan\*. The trip would then start with the 0845 sailing to Bute and finish with the 19 mile cycle from Ardrossan back to Wemyss Bay.
- \*If you do choose this option please take sunset times and weather conditions into account as you may need to carry lights and reflectives for this last leg.

**This is a self-led cycle and as such you should consider yourself to be on a solo daytrip.**

**You should make your own arrangements for travel etc. The ride is not an organised ride led by CTC Fife & Kinross so please be aware that you may be the only person who turns up (it has happened!).**

**The schedule is for guidance only. CTC Fife & Kinross cannot be held responsible for discrepancies in the schedule, for ferry cancellations, changes to published sailing times or price and availability of CalMac's Hopscotch tickets.**

To me, nothing enhances the sheer pleasure of cycling touring more than the thought that within your panniers you have your own self-contained wee home in the shape of a tent and a few bits of equipment. Cynics will say that this feeling will last right up to the point you reach your first steep hill, but with today's touring bikes' lower gears, this view has lost much of its validity.

Bicycles and lightweight camping are a union made in heaven as far as I'm concerned and in my view, there is no better way to travel and see the new places and meet new people. Cycling is a great leveller, a way of bringing you into immediate contact with people, denied to those who travel by car. The pace at which you travel is important too as while it's true that good distances can be travelled, the wise tourer savours every new view and turn in the road.

The following reviews I hope will encourage the notion that cycle camping need not be uncomfortable or arduous, but with carefully chosen equipment it can be an enjoyable experience.

All of the equipment reviewed I have owned and used and so my choices are based upon personal experience.

### TENTS

The axiom that "You get what you pay for" is particularly true when applied to tents. This was brought home for me when my "cheapie" Millets' tent broke its ridge pole in the middle of a gale of horizontal rain on the shore at Uig, and this after cycling all day in a storm. While making repairs and keeping an eye on my companion's trembling bottom lip, I vowed in future to buy the best I could afford and I've never regretted it.

That said, if you can only afford a modestly priced tent then buy it and tour anyway, viewing any disaster as part of the adventure. There are many good quality tents on sale and their merits are best reviewed in any climber's magazine. The tent below is my personal choice.



**HILLEBERG AKTO**

Weight of fly and inner (in stuffsack): 1196g  
Flysheet: Kerlon 1200 silicone-coated nylon, HH: 2000mm  
Inner: 30D, 42g/m high tenacity ripstop nylon  
Groundsheet: 70D, 90g/m high tenacity ripstop nylon, HH: 5000mm  
Pole: DAC Featherlite NSL  
Poleset (including stuffsack): 216g  
10 Vargo Titanium Pegs (in poleset stuffsack): 50g  
Total: 1462g  
Floor space of inner: 220cm x 90cm/60cm, 1.70sqm

This is an expensive tent selling as it does around £400 but it is possible to buy second-hand or in a sale for considerably less. As far as I'm concerned it is the best money can buy and the materials, construction and design are of the highest quality. It is stable enough to be used in winter and yet is easily erected and more importantly for me, when dismantling one just grabs handfuls of material and stuffs them in the sack. The air vents are so designed to make condensation negligible and it comes with a "no see um" mesh in the sleeping compartment. While it is made for one person, it is very light for a double skin tent and two can fit at a pinch. The sleeping compartment has a generous height of 3' which is a blessing in that this allows one to sit up. The porch is of reasonable size also and the tent can be had with its own footprint.

### SLEEPING MATS

Since puberty, cheap foam mats have never been acceptable to me and as I've aged I've demanded comfort especially as my tours have normally lasted for five or six weeks and have been up to 2,5000 miles. Modern materials and design mean that no longer does one have to accept an element of discomfort as the norm. I've had a few mats but here are my preferences.

**Therm-a-rest** led the field in sleeping mats for many years and offered a variety of air-filled mats of different lengths and weights. Younger and more flexible campers were content with the shorter and lighter "ProLite" models whereas I preferred the longer, heavier and more comfortable type available. The air-filled mats had the disadvantage of leaking body heat to the ground and this was noticeable in cooler climes. More recently they adopted the combined air and down principle of their main competitor and these self-inflating mats do away with this problem.

**Exped.** A very high quality product and my own favourite. A Swiss made product offering a down and air combination which is self-inflating. Prices range from around £80 to £100 and I chose the Exped 9 as a favour to my old bones. This is 9 cm thick and extremely comfortable and warm. While a few grams heavier than its counterparts, I opted for the extra comfort it offered given that the extra weight amounted to that of a small ham sandwich.





## SEATS

Now if you're happy hunkering down while cooking and eating and tend to admire the large green stain on your shorts which comes from sitting, then you can ignore this bit. However on a fairly long tour a seat is to be recommended.

Both Therm-a-rest and Exped produce these which are really nothing but a web of straps and buckles which convert the sleeping mat to a chair. These work very well while weighing very little and contributing a great deal of comfort. Be careful in that the kits tend to be designed for the individual maker's mat and are not interchangeable.

## SLEEPING BAGS

Cycle camping demands equipment which is light and compact and sleeping bags are no exception to this. If cold weather camping is not on the menu, then those more expensive, heavier bags intended for all-seasons camping can be ignored and a bag suitable for moderate temperatures can be chosen. Bags can have several different types of construction and be filled with materials ranging from artificial fibres to various combination of down and feather combinations. Those bags filled with artificial fibres do tend to be heavier and more bulky than those filled with down but are not as susceptible as down to the effects of damp or wet. They are also cheaper than down bags.

Down bags are lighter and can compress down to relatively small proportions and while they lose their insulating properties when wet, they can be protected by being stored in plastic bags. By choosing a summer weight bag of 500-700 grams one can gain more insulation by using a liner (to be recommended in any event as it keeps the bag clean) and by wearing a base layer when sleeping.

Bags made by "Buffalo" use a different principle by using a Pertex outer and a fibre pile inner. Inners can be exchanged according to temperature and this type of bag is unaffected by wet. Although bulky, when travelling the bag can be made smaller by using a compression sack.

My own personal choice is for a very light down bag although this tends to be an expensive option.

I used a "Rab" 600 gram bag which was adequate for Summer and even Autumn use if used with a base layer. I bought mine in a sale and best advice is to wait for the sales which usually offer good discounts.

## STOVES

Today we are spoiled for choice regarding stoves, which may range from pressurised petrol or special fuel, to those that burn twigs and everything in between. I've owned several types and while I can appreciate the advantages offered by the various types on offer, I've tended to settle on those that I regard particularly appropriate for cycle camping.

Pressurised fuel stoves are very good at producing lots of heat in a very short time and are ideal for those camping in winter conditions. I've owned several but the combination of high octane fuel and high pressure is one that I mistrust and especially so if one is forced to use one in a tent. Again, having to source minuscule amounts of petrol in a foreign country is not an activity that I'd recommend.



**TRIANGIA STOVE**

There are now many stoves on offer which use small twigs and woody material. By all accounts these are efficient when such fuel can be found. Some camp-sites however, and especially those sited in towns, may not have this fuel available.

In the end I've come to prefer a more gentle and safer form of heat in the shape of the "Triangia" stove. These come in a variety of sizes and the fuel is not pressurised which offers a safer option. They come with their own pots and pans and I would recommend the non-stick kind. A bit bulky it's true, but 100% reliable and fuel is easily found. I've found that the small kettle and a single pan is generally all that is required for my needs while camping. The Methylated spirits used should be carried in a fuel bottle and preferably not inside your panniers.

## GAS STOVES

The camper is spoiled for choice here with the number of well-designed and compact stoves available.

It's difficult to go wrong really but I would recommend buying one which uses a self-sealing cartridge of a butane/propane mix. Being self-sealing allows one to store the stove and fuel separately and the butane/propane mixture means that it is not so susceptible to low temperatures.

Self-sealing gas cartridges are widely available and if camping ones cannot be found then those used in brazing/plumbing can be used with the separate stabilising plastic base.

My personal choice for a gas stove was the MSR "Pocket Rocket", a very small, highly efficient gas stove the shape and size of a small Toblerone bar and extremely light.

**At the very least, I would hope that the above article might just spark someone's interest in the idea of cycle camping. The opinions expressed above are my own and I'm aware that others may have their own personal favourites which is all to the good.**

**These things are of secondary importance to the feeling of laying snuggled up in your warm sleeping bag, hearing the wind sighing against the tent and knowing that tomorrow your journey continues.** *George White*



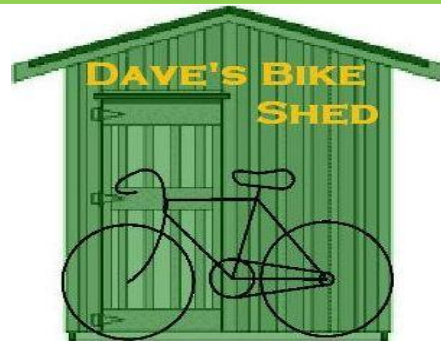
### DAVE'S BIKE SHED

23 Morayvale, Aberdour,  
Fife, KY3 0XE

Tel: 01383 860199 or 07772 948568

[www.davesbikeshed.co.uk](http://www.davesbikeshed.co.uk)

Email: [dave@davesbikeshed.co.uk](mailto:dave@davesbikeshed.co.uk)



Full time home based workshop offering bicycle maintenance, repair and cycle skills training. Price matching to the web always possible on parts that I fit, on bikes I maintain.

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Sustrans volunteer ranger; Fife CycleStart ride leader and Bikeability/Cycle skills trainer - kids and adults.

I understand the needs and requirements of the touring cyclist! Tandems and folders - no problem. Visit the website; phone, email or call at workshop to discuss all your bike needs.

*"My mission is to look after your bike so it gives you the performance you expect."* David Seaman



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City & Guilds

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# Snaps from (and en route to) the Rendezvous Meets



2<sup>nd</sup> March, Pan Ha' meet 'alfresco'



9<sup>th</sup> Feb. en route to the Hamilton's, Kelty



16<sup>th</sup> Feb. en route to Morwyns, Denbrae



16<sup>th</sup> Feb. first lambs on return from Denbrae meet



12<sup>th</sup> Jan. Muddy Boots Farm



16<sup>th</sup> March, Stuart & Nicki's, St. Andrews (only 6 brave cyclists)

If you have any interesting photos you'd like to see in next Fife Wheels please email them to me at [dougielatto@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:dougielatto@blueyonder.co.uk)





# RUNS LIST MARCH/APRIL 2013

## March

Sat 23      Map 58 ref [NO242112](#)      George & Anne White - 2 Cupar Road, Auchtermuchty

Sat 30      Map 58 ref [NT170961](#)      [Lochore Meadows](#) - Picnic Tables

## April

Wed 3      Map **59** ref [NO335095](#)      [Pitlessie Inn](#)

Sat 6      Map 59 ref [NO283128](#)      [Fife Animal Park](#) - Birnie Loch, Nr Collessie (Picnic tables or cafe)

Sat 13      Map 65 ref [NT111861](#)      Douglas & Lorraine Allan - 85 Evershed Drive, Dunfermline

Wed 17      Map 58 ref [NO235185](#)      Newburgh Harbour

Sat 20      Map 58 ref [NT021983](#)      Powmill Milk Bar ([Gift Barn Next Door](#))

Sat 27      Map 58 ref [NO063033](#)      Carnbo Village Hall

**THE RUNS FOR MAY 2013 ONWARDS WILL BE POSTED SOON ON THE WEBSITE.**

**Contacts:** Saturday/ Wednesday meets – Nan Shepherd 01592 612942    Social Events – George Shepherd 01592 612942

- On Saturday rides when a meet is at a member's house, please bring your own lunch.
- The Host/ Hostess is only obliged to provide tea and coffee.
- Drinks will be supplied at Village Halls, please bring your own lunch.
- **Please note there is a small charge of £1.00 at Village Halls to cover costs.**

## The Good, the Bad and the Ugly.

I couldn't resist taking this shot on the way home from the aforementioned Kelty 'meringue' meet. My apologies for the quality of the picture... it really was spectacular (honestly) and deserved to be taken with a camera rather than a mobile phone. I hope you can make it out.

The view is Loch Gelly with Little Raith windfarm behind it and Mossmorran Petro-chemical Plant in the distant background. Mossmorran was 'flaring' at the time and my position on the road made it look like one of the wind turbines had caught fire.

Had it not been such a drierch cold day I might have returned nearer dusk with my camera... but once I was home in the heat and settled.... it didn't seem to be quite so important any more. *Dougie Latto*

