

Fife Wheels



CTC Fife & Kinross Newsletter. Issue 79. Summer 2013/14



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In a break from my usual opening line of... "Is it that time already?"

I should perhaps be writing "It's about time!" ... after all... it has been quite a while since the last newsletter was published! February, to be precise!

The observant amongst the readers of Fife Wheels will have noticed there was a complete absence of a Spring issue this year. My apologies... but unusually it wasn't a PC malfunction ... or (as is probably more usual) my tardiness... there just wasn't enough articles to put a Spring newsletter together.. in fact there were no articles at all at that time.

So a really big "thank-you" goes out to this edition's many contributors who have contrived to nudge me towards getting the Summer 2014 edition together (and also to those of you who have given me a subtle hint that it was about time.. sometimes the hints were not quite so subtle... but thank you anyway.. at least it lets me know you were missing your newsletter!)

'Room 101'

There has been no submissions for 'Room 101' for this edition so I'm going to throw something into Room 101 that has been bothering me for most of the early part of 2014.. you may even have noticed it yourselves...**The Wind!** Yes you read correctly, the **wind** is being consigned to Room 101. I don't know about you, but I'm heartily sick of it? Apart from making cycling much harder than it needs to be, the wind (in one instance of note) made it dangerous for one Fife & Kinross member. The noise of the wind when it is roaring away makes conversation on the bike almost impossible... but without it I suppose we wouldn't have had this gem from three cyclists who struggled to be heard above the wind.. they shall remain nameless.. perhaps you could put names to them?

Cyclist 1 - It's windy today!

Cyclist 2 - No it's not, it's Thursday!

Cyclist 3 - So am I.. let's stop for a drink!

The instance worthy of note

I mentioned it above.. so I suppose I really should include it.. reluctant as I am to recall it!

On an extremely windy day in May (whilst cycling with my mate Ian Nicol) Ian had a horrific accident on the descent of the 'Jawbanes Road'... it was almost certainly caused by the wind catching him at the exposed crossroads with the 'Kissing Trees Road'... but we'll never know for sure as Ian has no memory of the accident happening at all... just the aftermath.

I was slightly off the front so didn't see it happen, nor did I hear it happen above the roar of the wind, but it involved many stitches, broken bones, a scary amount of blood on the road, a smashed helmet and a very difficult to make phone call to Ian's wife to inform her of his accident.

Ian (thankfully) has recovered remarkably quickly from his injuries and has since completed the '5 Ferries' and the club's Sma' Glen Century... he's even been allowed back out with me!

Now I know I said in the last issue that I wouldn't be mentioning helmets in Fife Wheels ("their merits or otherwise") ... but this is the instance most worthy of note... I think this would be a very different paragraph I'd be writing today if Ian hadn't been wearing his helmet that day!

Nuff said!

Finally in a serious attempt to have Fife Wheels published to coincide with the seasons the cut-off date for articles to be included in the Autumn Fife Wheels is by end of September.

THANKS Dougie Latto, Editor. (Cover photo taken at the Saturday rendezvous meet, 12th July 2014)

It started with a kiss – aye, the kind that involves snogging The Jawbanes' gravelly tarmac at 40 mph ! After an 8 week lay-off due to concussion, fractured ribs and various cuts and abrasions as a result of involuntarily leaving the (relative) comfort of my bike saddle I was slowly getting back into the cycling groove when Mr Latto casually suggested “You could easy dae a 90 mile lumpy, midge-ridden route around deepest Argyll”. A few recuperative miles later, I stupidly gave into his assertions but my ribs (and my carer) still had some doubts.

So, here we were, at some ungodly hour on a Sunday morning in June, unloading our bikes from the car in downtown Ardrossan, looking for a toilet and waiting for any other poor deluded fools to join us – this being an unofficial outing, we might have been on our own - in the event it turned out to be more. Dysart-based club stalwarts, George and Denise, plus Peter Valente from Lothian & Borders CTC along with Dougie and I made five. *(the highest attendance to date, ed.)* Strangely, our actual rendezvous point actually turned out to be Largs, on the 19 mile first leg to the ferry at Wemyss Bay - where Dougie met a big guy who claimed he'd been making decent bikes since 1908, although he looked a bit older to me...



Viking frolics over, and with the others starting to gather, it was now a five strong group who would take on the challenge and head for Wemyss Bay...where the first 'event' of the day would appear as that funny noise coming from my bike turned out to be a burst spoke and a very buckled wheel...what to do? Spoke key at the ready, Dougie the Mechanic sprang into action and loosened off enough tension in the other spokes to straighten things up and kill off my final excuse for not taking part – of course, with the constant brake rubbing it meant I would be at 125% effort to get over those hills (aye right!) - so it was onto the first ferry and the second grub of the day.

The 9 mile second leg felt more like as we were now on Bute's quiet roads travelling between Rothesay and Colintrave, the weather was dullish but mild and the terrain was more or less flat – almost enjoyable if you ignored the biting midgies – so we arrived ahead of schedule, managing to get an earlier than planned ferry and buying some extra time for food and refreshments on the road to Portavadie, over 26 miles and twa muckle hills away.



Ferry 2 of 5
Portavadie to Rhubadoch

This next stage was etched on my memory from a loaded tour I did some years ago so I set off prepared for a sweaty few hours climbing and, as I was under orders to stay in the saddle and preserve the back wheel, grinding it out in a granny gear was to see me fall way behind the youngsters. The descents weren't much better as memories of my recent crash kept me cautious when others were happy to let go – if you could see what remains of my old bike helmet, you would understand my new found reserve – loose gravel on the single track roads not helping to rebuild my confidence.



So, it was onwards and upwards around the head of Loch Riddon to Tighnabruaich and Kames where one of our extra mileage options came into play as we included a scenic loop – isn't all of this route scenic? - by way of Ardlamont and a swift coffee stop at Blairs Ferry before heading for soup and a quick beer at the Portavadie Restaurant and ferry no. 3 across Loch Fyne to Tarbert.

By now, the weather was getting warmer and the sun was putting in an appearance – the prior weather forecasts were at odds with each other so I put Met Office versus AccuWeather as a score draw – just in time for a time limited and challenging haul over Kintyre to Cloanaig which leaving Peter with a puncture to repair while the rest headed off on our second detour of the day which saw us nipping along to the seafood cafe at Skipness Castle. Peter arrived after quickly fixing his puncture but this left him very little time left before racing the approaching Lochranza ferry back to the jetty...I feel we could have allowed Peter another 5 minutes over coffee but there you go!



Okay, so now the end was in sight, well Arran was in sight to be exact, and a new cycling hill to test me – I've driven the road over to Sannox several times before and walked all the hills on view but, it turns out, it's slightly different on a pushbike - still, last hill of the day and what a descent on the other side! Some say "Man can't fly" but George McDermid gave it his best shot as he approached 50 mph with a following wind – let's just say I was a wee bit slower in reaching my top speed of the day, feathering the brakes as I went. From Sannox, all that remained was a wee coast along the coast to Brodick and a well deserved pint at The Douglas before catching the last ferry back to Ardrossan. My GPS said 110 miles, including ferries, but that would be cheating wouldn't it? *(the consensus was 86 miles of cycling. Ed.)*

On reflection, if an old crock like me can get round this magnificent route, after just recently getting back on my bike, then all of you should follow suit and vote "Yes" to a great day out in bonny Scotland.



I spent a week in Bratislava (which is in Slovakia) from the 6th May to 13th May, flying from Edinburgh with Ryanair.

I stayed in the Penzion Hviezda, This a low budget hotel which caters for workers with very little tourists, however it was clean and tidy, and breakfast was very good.

Attached to the hotel is a restaurant, where a good meal was approx. 8 euros



The hotel is located in the region of Podunajske-Biskupice and is very handy as you are only 10 minutes from the cycle path which takes you along the Maly Dunaj (small Danube) to the (main) Danube where you pick up the Danube cycle path. The cyclepath starts in Passau (Austria) and takes you to Bratislava. I cycled to Hainburg in Austria using this route.

This takes you across the Danube. It is not for the light hearted when you cross the bridge.



I had a strong wind against me all the way to Austria, also coming back.

I did various other runs around Bratislava, also I had good run to a village called Rusovce, again cycle path all the way to this place. If you wanted to continue this route would take you to Hungary.



I hired my bike from Bike Bratislava, both speak good English and will deliver the bike to the hotel, it was 10 euros per day, also a deposit is required (they have a website)

The main map I used around Bratislava was Freytag/Bernt (they also have a website)

I have never used sat navigation, I still rely on the old fashioned compass. In all the countries I have cycled this has never let me down.

It's not all about the cycling. Well, It **IS** all about the cycling but it's not always about going **OUT** cycling. Because the club survives on its membership fees, it's important every now and again to try and recruit new members. That can take many forms but sometimes it might just be to attend an event to try and raise the profile of the club so people know who we are and then hope that new members will maybe come along later.



The stand, looking resplendent

All in all, our little gazebo looked quite professional, especially as we all wore matching CTC t-shirts!

Denise had the great idea to run some sort of competition to encourage people to come over to the stand and thought that a Tyre-Changing Competition would be fun. With wheels, tyres and tubes donated by Bikeworks, along with badges donated by Denise herself and toys also by Bikeworks, we set up a 'hard' and an 'easy' option and let Dougie be our guinea pig to see how long it was going to take. After deciding which wheel was the hard one (it took him nearly 5 minutes) and with the easy one taking him a mere 1 minute 45 seconds we set up the board and waited.



Young Kaitlyn, aged 9, was our youngest competitor and changing a tyre for the first time ever!

It wasn't long before we had a steady stream of willing competitors, many changing a tyre for the first time so I found myself in teaching mode for much of the day. However, that added to the fun and it gave us time to talk to dads and mums while kids took up the challenge, or to talk to kids while their dads tried to show off (the only ones who punctured tubes getting the tyres back on were dads, and were instantly disqualified).

Everyone who took part was awarded a badge and young kids took away a handlebar hooter in the shape of an animal.



Denise tries the hard wheel but, although being first lady on the easy one, didn't quite make it.



The final leader board

There was an interesting mix of bikes. I had thought that people would be turning up on the usual hybrids and mountain bikes so it was nice to see a few 'non-standard' machines, including a very authentic looking rickshaw made from the heaviest elements you could imagine. Not the sort of bike I'd like to be humphing over many of the hills I've discovered in Fife.



There were bikes of all sorts

There were a few activities as well, including an obstacle course which Maureen had a go at (missing out the scariest obstacles I have to add)

It was a glorious day. Pure blue skies, not a breath of wind, just the sort of perfect Saturday we should have been out cycling. However, it was a worthwhile day where we got the club noticed, mentioned by the Kingdom FM trailer that was pumping out music all day and we handed out quite a few runs lists.

And we taught a few people how to change a tyre, so at least we'll be remembered for something!

George McDermid CTC Scotland Rep for CTC Fife & Kinross



Maureen attempting the Obstacle Course



The CTC Fife & Kinross team in matching CTC t-shirts

Footnote (from Dougie): Unfortunately I had to leave before the end of the event due to a prior commitment... but it also meant that I was the lucky one who managed to get a few miles in on the bike that glorious day! However, whilst cycling home, my promotion of cycling in Fife continued when I came across two Dutch touring cyclists lost on the 'scenic' cycleroute along Den Rd. (strangely this wasn't the first time this has happened, it was Germans the last time!) Having escorted them all the way to the outskirts of Kirkcaldy my job for the day was done... unlike the others.. who still had the job of packing everything away. Well done to George, Denise and Maureen who collectively got the whole thing together.

When Janet Brereton and I took part in the Talking Tandems C2C last year, on the good days we shared our bucket list of places we would like to cycle. We said we would try to do some of them together.

I hadn't cycled since our CTC holiday with some members of our club to Fochabers in Oct !! I had genuine excuses: eye operations, then an ever ending deluge of colds and chest infections. Also quite a few visitors over the New Year period, but the notion to get on my bike just wasn't enticing me. I was beginning to feel a bit guilty about not cycling.

Then mid- February, Janet contacted us saying that she had found a great deal at Crieff Hydro staying overnight on Sunday 9th March and did we fancy cycling up with her and Nick? Well the carrot was dangled, not just any carrot but a crispy, sweet Kingston carrot, and within minutes after checking the dates we agreed we would love to go. For years I've wanted to stay at Crieff Hydro and now I had about 3 weeks to get myself back on the saddle and a bit fitter.

The first time the weather was "suitable" for me to go for a spin was the 22nd February. Caty my friend hadn't cycled for years and persuaded me to go with her for a cycle, so I led just the two of us (ha ha I really did) around Kirkcaldy. We had a lovely time pedalling the 16 mile circumference of the Lang Toun. I was smitten and ready to do more miles in preparation for Crieff.

Dougie took me out on the tandem a couple of days later. I enjoy the tandem but I just wasn't convincing him that I'm not as comfortable on the tandem as I am on my solo and my neck and shoulders always kill me after being on the tandem. Somehow on this occasion Dougie listened to me (I think he thinks I cry wolf) and he got his measuring tape out and compared **things** between the tandem and my bike and guess what? There were discrepancies. So off he cycled with a mission up to George and Nan at Bikeworks and got a part for the tandem (a stoker's stem I've been reliably informed) After some adjustments, hey presto, I was considerably more comfortable. Still not 100% comfy but it made a huge difference to my enjoyment.

The day arrived (Sunday 9th March).

For me to give up my youth church over cycling is indeed a rare event, but I really was excited and although the weather was damp and 'mizzly', it was mild and guess what? No wind! Even better we were promised sunshine for Monday.

To make it even more appealing for me, we were meeting Mike and Bob who had also agreed to come with us at Vane Farm, so a coffee and some delicious edible fuel was promised.

We cycled to Janet's and off the four of us went. Dougie zig zagging, crisscrossing us out of Kirkcaldy and we got to Vane Farm via Auchterderran, Capeldrae/Westfield.



Janet and I were emphatic that we didn't want to go via the 'challenging' route. We know Dougie well enough that if he is left to his own devices it will be over any hill that can be found.

We met Mike and Bob at Vane Farm, had a quick coffee and bite and off we all went on the 3 tandems on the next leg of the journey over Dunning Glen via Drum. It was cold and very damp until we turned off at Drum.

I find Drum an intriguing little place. Dougie and I like a wee dram so it brings a smile to our faces as we pass the houses named after makes of Whisky, but wouldn't it just be wonderful if in Drum there was a little place where maybe you could sample the delightful Scottish nectar.

Very soon afterwards as Dougie and I were blethering for ages about our whisky tasting experiences we were in Clackmannanshire and ascending Dunning Glen. As they say “two heads are better than one”, well I want to christen a new phrase “4 legs are better than 2”. I really don’t have the legs for cycling up hills but on the back of a tandem with Dougie it wasn’t too bad at all. What a beautiful Glen. It’s narrow so you can at some parts feel cosily enclosed. It’s not too arduous and I was loving it. I’m the type of cyclist who hates rushing things so I asked Dougie if we could stop and maybe cadge a wine gum from Mike, have a chat with our fellow tandemers and just enjoy the glorious smells of nature, the scenery and quietness. So far we had seen deer, plenty of skylarks, a ...mouse. The Glen is well used by cyclists and only a couple of vehicles passed us. Once we were back on the bike again Dougie pointed out the old CTC hut and Big Bear Ranch where Hercules the bear was kept. We enjoyed the stories about Dougie meeting Hercules and even holding him when he was a cub. Ask Dougie to fill you in next time you’re out cycling with him it’s really interesting.

Then it was the descent. Now I definitely suffer from white knuckle syndrome. I DO NOT LIKE GOING DOWN HILLS. I trust Dougie, but on a tandem it is really difficult to go at the speed I would choose. On one bend there was gravel but it was visible and I was warned, but I held my breath and prayed till we got to the blooming bottom of the Glen. I’m always glad when I get to the bottom of a hill and take that big sigh of relief. It gets better... we were stopping for lunch at the Kirkstyle Inn at Dunning (I’ve pasted a wee bit below of what we were to look forward to)

“The Kirkstyle Inn sits in the centre of the historic village of Dunning. Once the capital of the Picts, it was here the King of the Picts, Kenneth I, died in 860AD. The Inn was built over 200 years ago in typical Georgian style along with the reconstruction of the rest of the village after it was completely destroyed during the first Jacobite rebellion. The only building to survive was St Serfs Church and it is across from here that the Kirkstyle Inn stands today.

The Kirkstyle Inn is [a warm](#) and friendly, family-run pub and restaurant, proud to boast it's Egon Ronay award for food and for the high quality of the beers and real ales, The Good Beer Guide and Cask Marque accreditation”.

Well the village was lovely, the Inn interesting, but it was **cold** and friendly. The food was ok. I felt for Dougie as he loves his grub, but the bowl of Carbonara was like a kids portion and thought it was coming with garlic bread, so he had to wait for the bread to arrive. I asked for chips instead of potatoes and got charged for the chips. Everyone else was happy though so I would recommend it but sit in the warmer main restaurant rather than the pub area.

We were ready to move on to get a heat in our bodies so off we went heading to Auchterarder. Our planned route was to go via Kinkell Bridge. This really stumped us. New houses were being built and somehow they had been given permission to close our route off for several months. There was absolutely no way through, it was all fenced off and very muddy. The men checked for a way past the fences, then they checked their maps and Garmins and I asked humans the best way to go so off we went.

The alternative route further west gave us a dilemma at a T-junction whether we could join the planned route again at Kinkell Bridge (adding 3 miles to our journey, or going via Muthill putting unknown miles on). We unanimously opted to take the largely downhill 1.5 miles back to Kinkell Bridge. It was a great route, very quiet and soon in the distance was Crieff. No one told me that there would be a climb up to the Hydro. Crieff is built on a hill and the sharpest climb of the whole trip was getting to the hotel. The High Street is narrow and there’s a lot of traffic but the vehicles were courteous and gave us plenty of room so steadily we climbed and climbed to our ivory tower. I couldn’t stop smiling because the Hydro is stunning. It’s 5 star luxury and I couldn’t wait to get us checked in and toss for who was to get a soak first.

The hotel staff were helpful and the pilots went off and got the bikes locked up while Janet, Mike and I did the checking in. Janet and I were rooming and we got Room 101. I just love little things like this to get the brain ticking. Dougie in room 7 with Nicky and Mike and Bob in room 8. I should have got Dougie in room 8 as that was his ice hockey number but I didn’t notice until we were given the room door cards. Our Executive Room £35 each (what a bargain) was luxurious. The soak was bliss. We booked a taxi to take us to a Gastro Pub recommended by Mike called The Tower for dinner and what a great choice. The food was brilliant and Janet and I quenched our thirst and anesthetised our bums over a bottle of wine.

We all agreed to have a bit of a lazy start so met for breakfast and planned to set off about 10. Many of the guests were quite interested in the tandems so we chatted for some time before we did set off but we were ambassadors for Talking Tandems and people were genuinely interested in the charity and bade us well on our return journey. The sun was out and again no wind. We were blessed.

We descended out of Crieff to Muthill, it all passed quickly and we had a quick stop at Glen Eagles just to group up and enjoy another of Mike’s wine gums. Bob told me that you could get thousands of pounds if you rented your house out during the Ryder Cup golfing championship. That got the cobwebs going because we were away when the Ryder Cup is on!!

Then next thing we were ascending Glen Eagles. Dougie and I were convinced we heard an eagle but couldn't see it. Nicky was sure he saw it lucky thing. It was a long climb but it was ok. I remembered where the top was because last year we cycled it with Nan & George and George & Denise on the way home from the camping trip. Again a wee stop to rest our legs and to enjoy looking back to where we had just cycled.

I was quite happy to get going again as I was promised another 'carrot' of coffee and a scone at the Tormaukin Inn (another of my favourite places). It was warm, and the scones were scrumptious with lashings of cream. We had a decent break but it was time to get back on the saddle again. My bum was really sore by now and I did want home so quite happy just to bash on and get a wee stop every 5 miles just to get the circulation going in my derriere.

We said our goodbyes to Mike and Bob at the Rumbling Bridge at the end of the Naemoor Road as they were heading back to Dunfermline. We cycled along past Lendrick Muir where I go, along with my youth club, for adventure weekends. While I was reminiscing about that the next thing were at Vane Farm. It was great taking advantage of the tail wind.

Janet treated us to a lovey cuppa sitting outside at Vane Farm. We so enjoyed hearing the birds and the warmth of the sun on our bodies. I could have quite easily just sat there and send Dougie off home for the car, but those days are gone. I had no excuses, the weather, the company, fully hydrated, just a sore bum to contend with.

Soon we were passing Capeldrae, Cardenden, Cluny all the places I was familiar with and before long we were saying our fond farewells to Janet and Nicky and home in time for our pizza and catch up TV.

It was a 96 mile all round trip and up for it again any time. Dougie said it was easier because this time I packed light so he didn't have to carry all the paraphernalia that I used to feel was essential.

Thank you Janet for the invite and look forward to our next adventure.

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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



@davesbikeshed



Qualified

2013 saw a series of cycling firsts for me. There was my first cycle camping trip, incorporating my first time with fully loaded back panniers, my first overnight ride, first weekend at the Lothian's Polmood hut, first pedal on parliament, first five ferries trip, and first time at a cycle rally (KM). However, there was still one first that eluded me.

I was a tad jealous last year when George McD set off early in the morning to take part in the Trivets in Stirling. This was a 100 mile course for the over fifties (I don't quite qualify yet). I followed George's progress avidly on Twitter. What a pace they were setting! As the miles mounted up, I kept wondering if the magical 100 barrier was something I could ever achieve. Thus far, my furthest was 73 miles in one sitting.

June 2014. Five intrepid cyclists attempted the Five Ferries challenge again. Despite a couple of wee extensions to last year's route because we were ahead of time, we could only muster 85 miles. Still, it was a great day out and one that you will no doubt read about in another newsletter article. Next week was the Sma' Glen ride – surely we could do something with that.

So George, armed with mapping web sites and his brand new Garmin, set about devising a route that would ensure I achieved my goal. Would anyone else be interested?

George and I arrived by car at the Lomond Centre at 8am on the off-chance that someone else had seen the suggested route and wanted to join us. We set off alone. It's not as sad as it sounds because we knew that we would collect two more at Findatie.

We headed along Boblingen way. This is probably the path I cycled most as a child in deepest darkest Pitteuchar. Back then the GDC's parks department had just planted the route with a few small trees and shrubs. Forty years on and it's a rather pleasant jungle, hiding the 'little boxes' housing estates from view. Sadly though, they've removed the pirate ship climbing frame from Warout woods where we used to play.

Eight miles in and we met up with Dougie and Ian. We headed past Vane Farm, across the motorway, along to Drum, Yetts O' Muckart, up through Glen Devon and over to Gleneagles. Then via a series of small roads that were largely unknown to me, we zigzagged our way across to Crieff. I'm not sure I've ever been to Muthill, but almost every road sign along the way told us how far we were from it.

We arrived at the Visitor Centre way too early – too early even for the lunch menu. I had to wait for my beanburger and chips. We had 40 miles under our belts and I still felt quite fresh. Bit by bit we started to amass quite a crowd of takers for the Sma' Glen jaunt. These had mostly cycled from Pitcairngreen, but there was also George S who'd come from Glenrothes. For many, this was going to be their first visit to the glen in quite some time.

Why does Crieff have to be built on such a steep hill? That's all I'm saying.



A quick snack at the derelict Amulree Hotel

The sun was just about out when we left the main road and headed up past the Famous Grouse Experience. The climb is a long one, but not steep, and the scenery is very rewarding. George and I remembered hearing cuckoos last year when we did the trip, but there were none to be heard on this occasion. Instead, a few of us were treated to a sighting of a red kite overhead. Linda spotted some other rare(ish) bird, but I don't recall what it was. Oh and George S rescued a sheep from a fence.

About half way now. We stopped at Amurlee for a quick snack. The old hotel is a sorry state and unfortunately the tearoom appears to have closed too. Such a shame as it is a lovely spot and probably appreciated by many cyclists of the pedal and motorised variety alike.

The descent towards Dunkeld was next. Jack decided he wanted to catch up with a club cyclist who had passed us by. George McD thought this looked like fun and joined in. Even pedalling in my top gear, lying as flat as I could to the bike, I was only just able to keep them in view. It was probably not a wise course of action to even attempt it as there were still 50 miles to go, but I did anyway.

After a minor detour into Dunkeld proper for a brief coffee stop, we were off again. There are no major climbs on this stretch back to Pitcairngreen, but it undulates so much that you never get into a decent rhythm. This type of cycling can be really knackered. Despite that, we were setting an excellent pace. We arrived at the green as their summer fete was drawing to a close. We said our goodbyes to the car assists and passed by the village pub. They all looked like they'd had a great day at the fete, but unfortunately there was no time to join them for a pint.

The next few miles were interesting to say the least. We were following the official cycle route around the west of Perth. It was reasonably well sign-posted, but I was thankful of George's Garmin. There were several occasions where you looked at the arrows and said 'really?' so it was great to have the confirmation that you were indeed still on the right track. It was quite a good route in the end – mostly traffic-free.

Bridge of Earn chippie, source of dinner for some, was the next and last stop. The two Georges found a lovely painted bench to sit on in the sunshine. Then it was off in the direction of Glenfarg and the toughest climb of the day. Again, not very steep, but the road went on forever and after 80 something miles there were twinges.



Mawcarse, Balgedie then Scotlandwell. Dougie and Ian left us at this point, with Ian muttering something about that lovely road past Shaws Mill (or words to that effect). Myself and the two George's carried on towards Auchmuir Bridge. I've always been lazy about calibrating my bike computer correctly, so I relied on George to inform me when I'd broken the 100 miles. There was no time for a celebration other than a cheer. However, my mental downhill sprint earlier in the day was taking its toll. My right knee was seriously sore. But only a few miles left – it had to be done. We said goodbye to George S and headed back up to Leslie. We were retracing our steps now from the morning.

The Lomond Centre and George's car were a welcome sight as we came to the end of Boblingen way. 107 miles, 12.9 mph average.

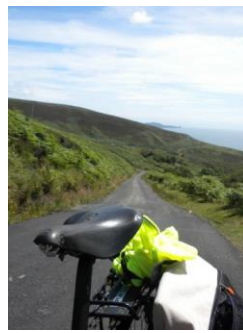
All that remained now, was the drive home, a dip in the hot-tub and my celebratory glass of wine.

After last year's excursion West via Claonaig we finally (after grandson Harry's garden lawn project was completed) got time for a mini tour to the Kintyre peninsula via the Campbeltown ferry that now has a more convenient Sunday sailing.



Sunday was an easy drive through Glasgow to Ardrossan, the afternoon ferry to Campbeltown and a very smooth crossing that had us arriving in glorious evening sunshine. After a minor grovel to get some supplies (we found Tesco later!) a short 5 mile pedal got us to Machrahanish campsite and settled down for the night. A stormy 12 hours later we were exploring the end of the road and walking on the beach in the sunshine that unfortunately was not to last. The plan had been to try to visit Davaar tidal island off Campbeltown but our eventual arrival was in torrential rain and zero visibility so it was back to town for a double fish supper and a soggy pedal back to the tent with hope for the morrow.

Sun out clear skies and off to the Mull of Kintyre. They said it was hilly, the map said it was hilly but what they didn't say was that it's effectively all one hill; 7 miles of it give or take the odd plunge down to a bridge!!!!!!! Not too much walking though as honour was at stake but it was never measured accurately. The sun was scorching which didn't help but the run back was fantastic with long views along the coast to Southend.



A historical passage through caves, castles, massacres, St Columba, beaches, art deco ruins and chapel ruins at Southend was rapidly followed by a pleasant pub visit and back to the tent.

Wet and windy overnight again it dried to a sunny morning for the East coast of the peninsula to Carradale. Flat it ain't; the hills you get are 12/14/16% in varying sizes and combinations with multiple hairpin bends. The sunny start deteriorated to a torrential soaking just short of Carradale; so we stopped to camp, dry out and use the beach etc. Having stopped the usual then happened when the sun decided to come back out with a vengeance; ho-hum, nice on the beach though.

Next day was a very pleasant pedal to Skipness in the sun with just a few heavy lorries on the road due to the wind farm / electric cable works, followed by a visit to the post office for supplies and coffee. Plan A had been to go on to a campsite at Shiskine on Arran and then the String road back to Brodick but the sun was out, clear blue skies over Arran and a flat calm on the Kilbrannan Sound called for a change of plan and a camp on the shore at Skipness and a plunge into the crystal clear sea.



A very pleasant afternoon gave way to a calm evening with hardly any midges. Friday had us on the first ferry from Claonaig to Lochranza and the drag up Glen Chalmadale over to Corrie golf club for coffee and scones and then Brodick for the ferry back to Ardrossan.

Hardly devastating miles but very pleasant few days in countryside we had never been through before.

For those who don't know, the Albert Watson Memorial Hut was built in 1947 in memory of Albert Watson, a member of the Lothians District Association of the CTC. It still stands in its little field in the upper Tweed valley on land that is still owned by the Lothians Member Group but the hut itself is managed by the Border Bothies Association. It's in fantastic condition for being 67 years old and offers very comfortable accommodation for 10. There were, however, only six of us that travelled down for the weekend so we had plenty of room to spread out.



The metal CTC sign that stands at the gate

I had hoped to cycle down with George and David but work got in the way and instead Denise and I travelled by car, as did Don and Bert. This did have the distinct advantage of us being able to take down some essential supplies: wood for the stove, a wee drop of wine plus stopping off at the Broughton Brewery to buy a case of ale, and 5 gallons of fresh drinking water.



Essential Supplies!

The water is quite important. I used to come down here a lot when I were a lad and in those days there was a stand pipe out front for water. The hut was built, after all, on the site of a former railwayman's hut during the construction of Talla Reservoir, so it would seem a little ironic not to have water. However, despite the addition of a small kitchen in the late 70's to the memory of another Lothians member, Gee, when running water was moved to inside the hut (such luxury), nowadays there is none and the only water to be found is from a small stream a few hundred yards up the old railway.

I was pleased to see, however, the addition of a rain barrel since my last visit last summer, collecting water from the roof. This avoided a lot of trekking to and fro to collect water for washing, though it didn't last us the entire weekend as it was quite dry.

On Saturday we decided on the classic circular route, climbing the infamous Talla, going over by the Grey Mare's Tail, pop into Moffat for lunch, and then come home over the Devil's Beeftub. There are definitely hills involved but there are also places to stop, admire views and consume local delicacies.

Climbing Talla is always an emotional experience for me. This area is one that my father loved and he was a frequent visitor to the hut in his 20's and 30's. The visitor's book, during the late 40's when the hut had just been constructed, has hardly a page without his name on it.

His ashes were spread at the top of the steepest section of the Talla climb and I always stop and pay my respects (convenient for a rest – thanks Dad). My mother too, was here almost as often and, she tells me, will one day rest at this very same spot.



The top of the steep bit of Talla, where my father's ashes were spread some years ago

Down the other side of Talla is St. Mary's Loch. It used to be a better downhill run all the way to the loch's edge but they damned the valley in the late 70's/early 80's to build the Megget Reservoir so the route down now has a few ups, but it's still a good run. At the bottom, when you get to St. Mary's Loch, there is a lovely wee café, frequented by inquisitive motor bikers, offering food you'd expect motor bikers to like. It so happens to suit cyclists just as well!



George piling on the food in the 'biker's' cafe

After climbing over by the Grey Mare's Tail we decided not to stop and look at the waterfall. It purportedly looks like the tail of a horse, but going downhill we needed a better incentive to stop than that so we kept going until we found a pub in Moffat for lunch.

Then, there was the long, arduous climb up the Devil's Beeftub, a climb that feels as if it will never end. What makes it worse of course is that when you are about to give up, you can see the next few miles stretching up, going on forever it seems.



The Summit of the Devil's Beeftub

It got its name from the clan, referred to as 'devils' by their enemies, who used to hide their stolen cattle in the deep hollow formed by the four hills that surround it. Or so one story goes – my father used to always tell me, in the dead of night while the wind was howling outside the walls of the hut and I was shivering in the pitch black dead of night under scratchy blankets, that the name came from an angry husband, taunted by the devil, who chopped his wife into small pieces, squished them into a suitcase, and threw it over the edge.

I still think of that every time I climb it!



The Devils Beeftub - for hiding cattle or disposing of your murdered wife?

For some reason, Saturday night became a comparison of the two weekends, ours in superb luxury, whilst those on the Ladies Weekend were, at that very moment, being subjected to the horrendous experience of hot running water, showers, heating, and something disgusting called a 'flushing toilet'. We wanted none of it. They even had rain which really did sound awful. We definitely had the better choice.



What's in the pit George?

It was decided that, on Sunday, a shorter run would be preferable as George and David had to cycle home the next day and they didn't want to do too much. So we did another classic circle going over Dreva, then following roads on the south side of Biggar Water, to finally enter Biggar for lunch and come back home along the north side of the river.

The day did start curiously though and it lets me know I'm aging. I can't remember who it was that said it first but just before we left someone said, 'Oh, I've forgotten to take my pills'. There was then a mass leap as four others realised and exclaimed the exact same. Denise looked on in bewilderment.

So, with pills duly taken, five old men and a young lady headed up Dreva.

This passes by Dawyck Botanic Gardens, run by the Botanics in Edinburgh (though we were too early for a visit), before heading up high above the Tweed valley. It's a good climb and has a couple of false tops, just to keep you on your toes but the views are quite lovely and the drop down to Broughton, where we had to stop for morning coffee, quite exhilarating. It was a shame the cookers weren't working but they managed to microwave bacon rolls for those who wanted them and tea and scones did for the rest of us.

It was an easy undulating ride after this and we found a good pub in Biggar that kept us happy at lunchtime. Long enough at least to get back to Broughton where the call of Broughton Ale was now quite strong in all of us and we just had to stop again.



Dreva Summit



The pub cafe in Broughton



Outside the pub in Biggar

Our last evening was spent quietly finishing off all the wine and beer we had brought, and subsequently accumulated over the weekend because we were sure we never had enough. I took time to browse through the visitors' books and relived Christmases, summer holidays, and weekends away of old, wondering how on Earth my parents had managed to continue to cycle up and down from Edinburgh with a small family in tow. In one entry my father was complaining that the cycle shed was too narrow to fit a sidecar, so I guess that was how myself or one of my brothers had got there.



My first visit to the hut in 1962, aged 5 months

Not so easy for George and David the next morning as they set off, but at least it was glorious sunshine. Don and Bert left next leaving Denise and I to lock up.

Just that toilet to empty one more time!



Leaving on a glorious Monday morning

Janet Hamilton

It is with regret and sadness that I have to report that Janet Hamilton , a long serving member of CTC Fife & Kinross, has passed away after suffering a stroke.

It is only in recent years that Janet & Tom Hamilton stopped hosting a Rendezvous meet at their house in Kingseat after providing the club with a popular and well attended venue for several years.

It was always a most welcoming home and Janet always made sure all of the cyclists who turned up, in all weathers, were provided for and engaged everyone in conversation... nobody was ever missed out.

Janet acted as Secretary for the club in the 1980's.

I was really sorry that I was unable to attend Janet's funeral but I have been informed that there a good number of club members attended.

Below are some tributes and memories of Janet.

My abiding memory of the kindness shown by Janet goes back to one of my first winter rides. It was a bitterly cold day when your breath hung as a freezing fog as you rode along. The meet was at Janet & Tommy's. On arrival my feet were like blocks of ice. No problem though, within minutes they were cocooned in big fluffy animal slippers & a warming cup of tea was in my hands. I will never forget the warmth of that welcome.

Linda Gibson

Janet – (with us it was always Janet & Tom). It was Janet(& Tom) who introduced us to the CTC in 1980 and it was Janet (& Tom) who introduced us to Tandem riding. So without Janet (& Tom) we might never been part of it all. Thank You Janet (& Tom).

Charlie & Lorraine Brown.

Janet Hamilton was a true cyclist. You were always assured of the warmest of welcomes at the meet-up at their home in Kingseat.

She brought fun and laughter everywhere she went from the riotous Halloween parties at Dunfermline and District club rooms (treacle scones, dookin' for apples - the full works: supposed to be for the children but much enjoyed by the adults!) to club runs and cycle tours.

She will be greatly missed.

Margaret Lauder

It was the 1992 CTC Birthday Rides held in Ayr.

There were 13? Members of the DA attending, including Janet & Tom. In general we enjoyed great weather but there was one dreich day and with strong winds. After our stop for morning coffee, the wind seemed to be blowing harder than ever.

We were just getting ready to roll and Janet came up behind me. "I'll ride behind you Gordon, these big broad shoulders will keep the wind off us wee folk!"

Gordon Paterson

This is one of my favourite photos (right) taken in April 2003 in the Claonaig bus shelter as we waited for the Lochranza ferry.

We were approaching the end of what had been a great wee tour.

The smiles on all our faces, with Janet at the heart of it, speaks volumes.

It was the only time I had the privilege of sharing a tour with Janet, and it's a memory I will cherish.

David Gibson





Bluebell carpets near Abertfeldy



The Sil'ry Tay, Ladies Weekend



Much hilarity at the Bell's Centre, Perth



Sunscreen to go!

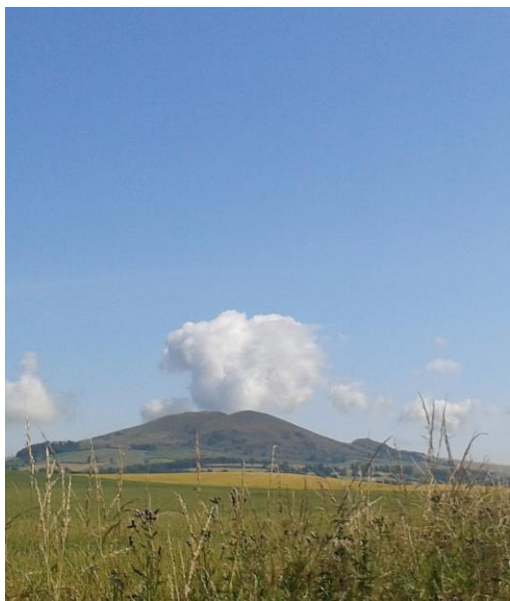


Jessie Mac's Hostel, Birnham



Lorraine's essential travelling teapot

MORE PHOTOS



Largo Law 'erupting', Mon. 21st June



Lamb with bike marking.



I hope the postie doesn't have to deliver the post by bike !!

RUNS & MEETS

July 2014

Wed 30	Map 59 Ref NO543057	Andrews Farmhouse Cheese Company, Falside Farm, Nr Anstruther
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August 2014

Sat 2	Map 59 Ref NT492001	Elie Harbour, Elie
Sat 9	Map 59 Ref NO275015	Bikeworks, Castleblair Business Park, Fullerton Road, Glenrothes
Wed 13	Map 59 Ref NO382017	Letham Glen, Leven
Sat 16	Map 58 Ref NO134039	Burleigh Sands, North Shore, Lochleven
Sat 23	Map 58 Ref NO129190	Brig Cafe, Bridge of Earn
Wed 27	Map 59 Ref NO321084	Muddyboots, Balmalcom
Sat 30	Map 65 Ref NT084791	Abercorn Church, by Hopetoun House
Sun 31	Map 58 Ref NO115039	Meet 10am for group ride. Car Park, Old Doctor's Surgery, next to swimming pool, Kinross



Great Nephew, practising pose for his first car?