

The first month of Cycle Ayrshire's new cycling year formerly consisted of reports for only two rides but with the recent addition of do-it-yourself outings the first fortnight of January has seen them out three times!

The first was on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> with a lunch meet at Irvine's Puffer.

Around thirty showed face for a social lunch with half that number attending Gemmell's Garden Centre a week later for a similar meet.

The cycling year was emphatically started when a forty mile Main Ride was added the next day.

### **Main Ride 14<sup>th</sup> January**

Twelve smartly attired riders assembled at Kilwinning Train Station, resplendent in their Christmas pressy gear and bikes for the first Main Ride of 2018 last Sunday- clearly some had been on the nice list!

The Met Office forecast proved true and as the group rolled-out they knew they were in for a ride of two halves. With a 20-30 mph SSE wind set to prevail all day, it was going to be tail-wind all the way out to Lochwinnoch and a head-wind all the way home on the return route.

Skipping out the back of Kilwinning on the A737 the riders traversed across to the more cycle friendly Blair Road via the cycle path. The Blair Road was left at Auchenskeith Farm and the riders enjoyed the quiet country back roads, several stretches of which had pristine new tar- thank you North Ayrshire Council - across to the B707.

Crossing the B707 it was up past Cockinhead Moss and round the east side of Beith Admiralty and down into Barrmill. The Angels Portion was lost in the wind as the group headed out the Gielisland Road past the Whisky Bonds, en-route to Beith.

Crossing the A737 into Beith, it was a pleasant glide down through the town to meet up with Woodside Road and traverse the valley along the East side of the Barr Loch on quiet farm roads. A short stint on the A760 got the group onto the West side of Castle Semple Loch and delivered them at the lunch stop in the Visitors Centre.

Re-fuelled, it was Cycle Route 7 straight to Kilbirnie, with the shelter from the trees on either side being gratefully received as the group headed up-wind. Exiting at Ladeside Football Club, they cut back on the B777 to catch the B780, then heads down, bunch-up

and across to Dalry. The Fairlie Moor Road was both giver and receiver; it gave a partial wind break, unfortunately that was a hill !

Even after cresting at Auldmuir Farm and turning to descend towards the Munnoch Reservoir, there was little respite as this was met with some fierce cross-winds. Meeting back up with the B780 it was straight across and back into climbing mode, as the group "bootled" up, and down, along nice quiet single track roads to meet the Saltcoats- Dalry road (B714).

With a view of the coast taken, it was heads-down once again all the way into Saltcoats. The drop down into the town was rewarded with an impromptu stop at a Hygge "pop-up" Café.

On a "take it or leave it" menu of Polish Apple Cake and Hot Chocolate, all was taken and none left as the riders re-fuelled while toasting their toes around an open fire.

More good fortune came with the unearthing of a couple of interesting bottles which enabled a toast to "The New Riding Year" with a "wee dram" and a "nip" of Port.

Warmed, externally and internally, the riders re-mounted their steeds and set off with fresh vigour for the short stretch back to Kilwinning.

This was further assisted by the ride leader's local knowledge as they went on a "rat-run" through Saltcoats and Stevenston to close the forty mile loop back at the station.



Toasting the New Riding Year !