

Last week's rides for Cycle Ayrshire demonstrated how creative our ride leaders can be. The two outings introduced many of the participants to fresh and stimulating routes with an individual quality which singled them out.

The first was last Wednesday and started from Johnstone Station. At the set-off time nine riders had arrived and were soon heading towards Linwood but shortly to leave the road, crossing burns and the A737 by footbridges following seemingly ever narrowing tracks between more burns. A remarkably brief stop for a puncture repair demonstrated how it should be done. Eventually crossing the A761, a short ride led to Ferguslie Park on the edge of Paisley. After a variety of turns, in varying amounts of traffic, they passed to Inchinnan then Abbotsinch Roads and the way into Glasgow Airport. Heading westwards in airport traffic, and trying to avoid attracting too much attention, they found a track indicating the route to Inchinnan Business Park led to the A726 and Barnsford Road to pass along the north-west side of the airport. On crossing the Black Cart a right turn along Inchinnan Drive carried on to the A8 with notices about the bascule bridge over the Black Cart being closed. It was closed but not to cyclists. On the east side of the bridge a path down to the left led to a small monument entitled St Conval's Chariot and the Argyll Stone. More on the web about these..

The track continued along the east side of the Black Cart then on the south side of the Clyde. A stop across from the old John Brown's ship yard gave an excellent view of the Titan crane. The Clyde was crossed on the small Renfrew Ferry making the boat rather busy, but another passenger squeezed on. Back on dry land they took a cycle track along an old railway line north-westwards, then a cycleway up to the Clydebank Shopping Centre brought the group to the Forth and Clyde Canal. Their next destination was the Erskine Bridge. Crossing the bridge they had a look at the old Erskine ferry landing and had a picnic stop nearby. The return to the start was by way of tracks beside the Clyde, the A726 and Houston Road towards Bridge of Weir, short-cutted by a partially closed Moss Road to Linwood and tracks back into Johnstone confirmed the variety of terrain and scenery in this part of the country. The fine warm dry conditions that day aided enormously the enjoyment of the ride.

Sunday's ride was back in Ayrshire but also highlighted the variety that can be found in a few miles of cycling. With the promise of a dry day twenty-one riders assembled at Kilwinning Station for a ride in the group's Easy Ride category, usually about twenty-five miles. This one stretched to thirty but was well worth it. Setting off, the leader chose a quick route out of the town and in under a mile they were starting north on the mesh of minor roads which serve the local farms.

It was a bit up and down to begin with past High Smithstone to eventually emerge onto the B714 at Tower. Turning left for half a mile, a right turn took them onto the unclassified road to Caddell Farm where the road turned into a rougher track for a few hundred yards. The next crossroads and a right turn reintroduced tarmac and the start of a steady climb past Dykehead to reach the Fairlie Moor road just before Birkhead and the depleted Caaf Reservoir. Now above 500 feet it was obvious that there was more climbing as the moor road visibly rose ahead. Two miles later the top was reached and a panorama of the Firth of Clyde lay before them. It was no hardship for the first to the top to wait for the others as there was much discussion about where they were seeing.

As the 800-feet-in-two-miles brake-block-wearing descent started, the group briefly stopped to chat to a fellow member who had arrived by car and who was recovering from a hip replacement. Soon it was time to let gravity do the cycling and continue the drop to the A78 where the tenor of the ride changed. They were now back on the coastal cycle route heading for a picnic lunch at Portencross which was made all the more pleasant by a warm reception from the volunteer staff at the castle. Some picnicked on the roof while others 'dined' at the refectory table in the grand hall. There was no hurry to leave as the dull morning had cleared to a true summer's day.

Eventually restarting, the cycle route was followed south through Seamill to Ardrossan and Saltcoats. Emerging from Stevenston onto Dubbs Road across the B752 the group continued to dwindle as riders left for home leaving only a handful to return to the start. Full praise was accorded to the leader who had seamlessly coupled two rides in a day with a morning hill and dale followed by an afternoon of flat riding with some history thrown in. The route taken can be viewed at <http://www.mapmyride.com/routes/view/1751005790>



Steep ups on Fairlie Moor Road



Posing at Portencross