

Last week saw Cycle Ayrshire offer three rides with a specific reason for the outing other than simply cycling. The first centred on Dumfries House and Estate where a dual-function day saw a Twenty's Plenty and a DIY Ride merge for lunch last Wednesday. At the 10am start time, fifteen Twenty's Plenty riders were ready to set off at a brisk pace on a hilly circuit in keeping with the non-stop aims of the ride.

Leaving the Estate to the north onto Barony Road, a quick right and left got them over the bypass into Auchinleck and uphill past the Academy to briefly drop into Catrine and out on the B713 to cross the A76, skirting the Catrine Coffee House and on to climb the Haugh towards Mauchline. A left turn before the railway bridge and another left got them on the downhill of Barskimming Road and then uphill from the River Ayr bridge. First left taken to pass Roddenloft and Auchinbay, they continued to the steepest climb of the day at the right turn to Cawhillan and over to Mote Toll. Crossing the A70, they joined the B7046 and continued to Skares, turning left back to the A70 which they followed for a few hundred yards to reach the Dumfries Estate entry and the promise of the tea room.

Some were riding this type of ride for the first time and with the exception of a puncture repair with volunteer assistant all made it round the challenging route in two hours. Not all stayed for lunch, but those who did met the four members who had arrived at the tea room under their own steam, having taken up the DIY option. After lunch a group of six were introduced to many of the attractions of the estate before making their way home.

Saturday and Sunday corresponded with Ayrshire's Open Doors Day and so the two rides were designed to take advantage of the opportunity. Being the first Saturday of September it was a 'ladies only' ride with the start at Barmill, although several of the fourteen participants rode there from Glengarnock Station. Tea, biscuits and a guided walk round the community garden with a knowledgeable guide started the day before a two mile cycle to Gateside for lunch.

Beith was the next stop with a visit to the 1810 Parish Church before a downhill took them to the Auld Kirk and graveyard for a brief look as an unsafe wall had closed it to the public. Continuing downhill they cut across the A760 to get on to NCR 7 for Kilbirnie where a few made for the station and home. The remaining group visited Stonyholm Mill where another guided tour filled them in on the net-making tradition and its output to the salmon-farming industry.

Back on the bikes, Kilbirnie was left behind and Glengarnock Station passed, where a few others dropped off for the train leaving three to zig-zag back to Barmill. Cycling may have been a bit piecemeal but the history of the area was certainly emphasised enthusiastically by the Open Doors' guides, much helped by a sunny day.

The next day's ride was NOT a sunny day as a three-stop Open Doors Day ride set off from Troon's North Shore car park for the Irvine Maritime Museum.. The seven starters went via Barassie to Gales Road then Marine Drive passing the partly demolished Magnum. After the time in the museum and a Puffer lunch, they left in heavy rain and wind for Dundonald Castle by way of the footbridge to Shewalton then Drybridge. The weather curtailed the visit and the consensus was Dundonald Hill as the quickest way back to the start.



At Beith Parish Church