

FIFE & KINROSS CTC NEWSLETTER AUTUMN/WINTER 2025

We had another busy 2nd half of 2025 with some great Sunday rides with a good turn out.

August: Linda invited us to join her on a ride to the Copper Oven at Arbroath. 12 of us cycled there and back the lunch venue was a great choice and served lovely Italian food. Being an almost traffic free ride there and back it allowed us all a good opportunity to talk almost as fast as we cycled. A really social day out and 40 miles which I think it is fair to say we hardly noticed. Great scenery venue and company.

September: Dougie set a route for 12 of us to join him starting from Perth through Auchterader and lunch at the Crieff visitor centre It was a really good day out 50 miles and a route involving roads a lot of us had not done before or for a while.

September: The group holiday this year was to the Yorkshire Wolds



The venue was Springdale Farmhouse Rudston it was a well appointed farmhouse that housed the 10 of us with ease. We were right on route one which meant exploring the Wolds was made easy.



There were various routes that could be taken from the area including cycling the Wolds and also visits to the coast.



Day 2 outing crossing over the Humber doing a loop through Lincolnshire and meeting 3 of Linda's friends who took us on a great ride including a lunch & afternoon tea stop 56 miles in all.



Flamborough Head



Hornsea



Malton



On our way to Bridlington

The club Ceilidh at Kingskettle village hall with the Herculean Revival Band giving us a great night of music and fun. A mention should be made of all the hardwork behind the scenes to make this a success and a special thanks to Kaye & Linda it really was a labour of love and was on the verge of being cancelled. The event raised £79.00 to go to STAND for dementia.



December saw a pre Christmas get together at Linda & Davids a full (to bursting) house. Huge thanks to both of them for hosting the event once again I dread to think how long it took to wash up.

Many thanks to all who hosted in their homes last year it is really appreciated and enjoyed by all.

It is always good to hear what rides and holidays people have done through the year and Linda and Dons trip really give a good insight to travelling and places to stay on the trip to

A Hebridean Adventure

Don and I decided to have a cycling trip up the Hebrides, one as I'd never been down as far as Barra and two because he wanted to visit Glenelg.

So we planned out the route, then Don said he'd find the accommodation and I said I'd organise the ferries. The ferries were really quite simple as you go onto Caledonian MacBraynes <https://www.calmac.co.uk/en-gb/> and you can organise them as a group.

However, before that, I had to plot out the route and find out what ferries I would need to get. We were planning to leave from Oban on 23rd July on the 1pm ferry to Castlebay, Barra, so the planning went from there.

However, a week before we were due to go, CalMac contacted me to say the ferry time was changed on that day and it would be sailing at 10am - that made a big difference as we'd need to be leaving home in the early hours, so instead we decided to get accommodation the night before at Connel Bridge which is about 7 miles from the ferry terminal.

All the other ferries were on time, apart from the Glenelg ferry, which was cancelled. More about that later. The ferries I booked were:

- Oban to Castlebay
- Ardmhor (Barra) to Eriskay
- Berneray to Leverburgh (Harris)
- Tarbert (Harris) to Uig (Skye)

There are a number of causeways ie from Eriskay to South Lewis and from Ardmore to Benbecula and Benbecula to North Uist and North Uist to Berneray but these are all nice to ride across, even when it's windy.

On 23rd, we cycled from Connel Bridge to Oban and took the cycle path, this wasn't the way I'd intended going, but as we saw a path signposted, we took it. It must've been a Sustrans route as it was hilly. Wish I'd taken the route I had planned which was closer to the coast! Anyhow, as we got to Castlebay a lot earlier than anticipated, we booked into the hostel and left our luggage and headed off to Vatersay. There was another causeway there, which was easy to cross and we spent a couple of hours (!) going around the island. That may be an exaggeration, as the island isn't that big. We then came back and headed to the hotel for dinner, which was very expensive for pub grub. We tried the Indian, but it was fully booked, so we went to the Co-op and bought food and cooked it in the hostel. Much better value.

Next day we headed for Lochboisdale via Eliogarry at the top of Barra and back to the airport to see the flight landing and leaving on the sand, then afterwards heading to Ardmhor for the ferry to Eriskay (South Uist). We stopped off at the Politician Pub where 'Whisky Galore' was filmed all these years ago. You'd never know, but it was a nice meal, then onto our B&B.

Next day was a visit of South Uist, into Benbecula and up to Lochmaddy via a museum, a distillery, ice cream and a Smokery. We were actually too late at the smokery, but bought some smoked scallops with the intention of eating them in two days time at the hostel (which we forgot to eat and as they were supposed to be refrigerated, had to go out).

The next day, we were heading through North Uist onto Harris and our B&B in Scalpay. I'm not letting Don book the accommodation again - Scalpay is about 7 miles west of Tarbert and it up and down hill the whole way - not small hills either! There was only one restaurant on the island too - very expensive - nouvelle cuisine and not particularly good. Anyhow, prior to arriving there, the day had started off with sun, then rain, then sun again and we came up the west coast, which has absolutely stunning beaches and views. Well worth the trip.

Next day we took the ferry over to Skye, where the rain started and continued whilst on Skye, thankfully, it wasn't too bad, but did need rain gear. Because the ferry didn't get us into Uig until after 2pm with 40 miles to go, we just put our head down and cycled. Main roads, but they weren't too bad.

Next day we headed further south with the intention of taking the Glenelg ferry, but it was cancelled so we had to stay on the road, which was fine apart from being quite busy, but again, just kept our heads down and pedalled. Got to Ratagan about noon, which was too early to go to the hostel so I suggested going over the hill to Glenelg as that's where Don wanted to see. By the time I was only quarter of the way up (at 14%) I said I was turning back and Don could go on his own. Actually, I didn't turn back but walked and cycled where I could. Got to the first viewpoint then headed up again, but was soon walking. It got up to 17% when Don appeared back down the road. Apparently a driver had asked him if he was with the women walking up the hill (that was me) so he came back. I said he should go on, but he said he didn't have enough battery power - so I guess he'll just have to do that journey again on his own.

From there we went through Invermoriston, Fort Augustus to Fort William, then back to Connel Bridge. Overall a nice journey, but I think we could've cut it shorter and done a few more miles per day, especially on the last couple of days. I'm sure that Don now knows what annoys me when I'm riding with him, as I must've let him know (!!) just as I'm sure I must've annoyed him at times, as I do know what I'm like (haha)

The weather was warm, wet, overcast but ok for summer in the islands.

A Ride Along the Shimanami Kaido

This time last year Jim and I were up to our eyeballs planning a 'once-in-a-lifetime' trip to Japan; 3 weeks, 10 cities, 5 flights, innumerable trainsbut no cycling. Then someone said "Oh if you're going to Japan you **HAVE** to cycle the Shimanami Kaido". We looked at each other and said "The Shimawhatty hoooha?????" as we'd never heard of it. Jim was stunned that there was a ride somewhere in the world that he hadn't heard of, and also

not got on his list of 'silly things to do on a bike' so immediately trawled the internet for details of this elusive route. He was provided with the following information

The Shimanami Kaido offers stunning views of the Seto Inland Sea, with its teal waters, picturesque islands, and architectural marvels. While the route is accessible by car, it is primarily designed for cyclists, with dedicated bicycle paths and infrastructure. The route traverses several islands, allowing cyclists to explore various villages, temples, and shrines. The Shimanami Kaido is known for its fresh seafood and citrus fruits, which can be enjoyed along the route. Bikes can be rented at various terminals along the route, and there are cyclist-friendly "cycle oases" with amenities like air pumps and toilets.

The Shimanami Kaido starts in Onomichi on Honshu Island and ends in Imabari on Shikoku Island. The route involves crossing six islands and six bridges, including the famous Kurushima Bridge.

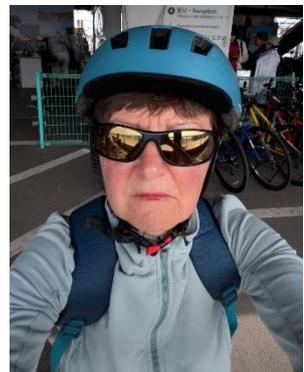
It can be completed in a day by experienced cyclists, but a more relaxed pace is recommended to enjoy the scenery and attractions along the way. The area is relatively mild in climate, but winter can be chilly, so it's advisable to bring layers and consider indoor hot springs.

Well, all of that sounded right up our street so we decided that we really should fit it in. We started to investigate the ride further and decided that we would alter our itinerary to accommodate a day's cycling. 40 easy miles, 6 stunning bridges, citrus groves, beautiful views across the Seto inland sea, basically flat..... what could possibly go wrong??? Well, to start with we hadn't originally factored in Jim's wrist surgery 4 weeks before departure! Wrist surgery meaning that silly things like gear changing and braking would be difficult. Jim thought we could manage the return trip by bike, but I persuaded him that one way with a return by bus would be more manageable! (The red line shows the road route, and the yellow one the cycle route.)



We had arrived in Onomichi the previous afternoon and been to speak to the bike hire people. Their website had been confusing and we weren't absolutely certain that we were going to get bikes that would suit us. Despite there being literally thousands of bikes in their store, they didn't have anything that fitted the description on the website. We tried a couple but the guy was looking weary so we just settled on the ones he'd looked out for us.

Jim's hire bike passed muster, but mine was a little on the ropey side ...and also approximately 3 sizes too small. I usually ride a men's small so a Japanese men's XXS meant having the seat post at its full extent. They also made me wear a helmet.... After about 1 minute of cycling I heard a clattering noise from the rear wheel and found that the dork disc had become detached and was rotating freely round the hub so the clattering continued for the whole 50 miles. No bikes with racks and bags were available so we had to cycle with rucksacks – not something either of us do willingly, but we decided that carrying some food and an extra layer would be prudent.



The route is marked by a blue line painted on the tarmac so should be easy to follow, but on several occasions it gave us options for detours with both routes leading towards the finish point at Imabari. The hire guy had given us a better map than the one we had brought with us so this helped us find our way on the most direct route. There are also great sign boards at all of the bridges with all sorts of useful information – including how far you've come, and how far you still have to go! The bridges are all primarily road bridges on an expressway joining the islands to the mainland. Cycling on the expressway is forbidden. The cycle route goes a completely different way down at sea level and joins the road at the bridges. This necessitates some ingenious cycle paths that either snake back and forth or go round in circles to allow you to reach the road level. I can't imagine the British or Scottish governments going to that amount of trouble just to let a few (ok, several hundred thousand) cyclists avoid the old ferries. All of these paths are set at 3% max so we didn't find them tough. We spoke to a pair of Americans at the end of the day who asked us how we coped with the hills without ebikes....we just said "We're Scots – what hills?"



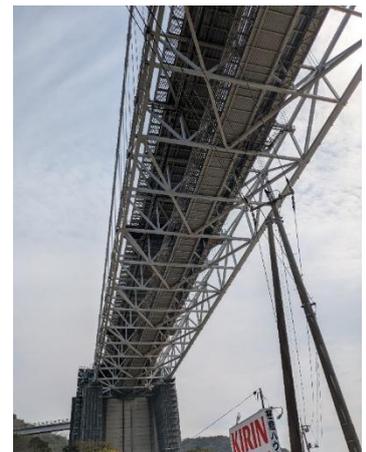
Although the cycle route officially starts in Onomichi, we'd heard that most cyclists take the 10 minute ferry ride to the 1st island as for the first few miles cyclists are on the same road as the expressway traffic. The ferry was busy with other excited cyclists. The sun was out, there was little or no wind and there was an excellent day's cycling in prospect.



We cycled for a few miles and stopped occasionally to take photos of the views. Throughout Japan hills and mountains just appear to rise straight out of the sea. All human activity is squeezed into a narrow strip along the shore.



The first bridge we went 'over' we actually went under. The cycle track was suspended under the road deck. The view was very limited and the noise of the traffic above was deafening. The wind was more noticeable at that height and with a steady stream of cyclists either overtaking or coming the other way there was no chance to admire the view.





Before we hit the 2nd one the sun had disappeared and the weather turned distinctly 'Scottish' – sideways torrential rain/sleet! We donned the waterproof layer we had been sensible enough to bring with us (some idiot had forgotten to pack gloves!), sheltered for a while but then realised it wasn't blowing over any time soon and we were just going to have to get on with it. The jackets stayed on until we were back in our hotel room much later that evening. (We had been told that the weather in that area in March would be like a Scottish summer.... We stupidly took that to mean warmer!)

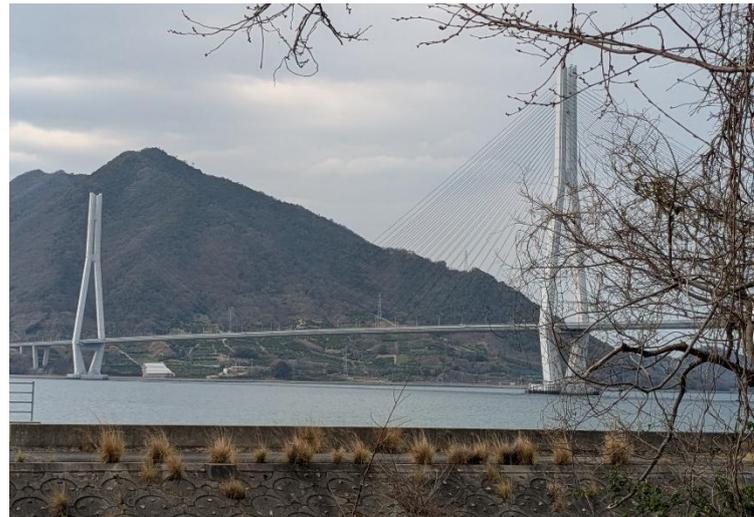
This bridge was very exposed and the winds were indeed 'cross'. I was thrown about the cycle path and was a wee bit scared. I'm not good with heights these days and the wind and rain meant that by the time I'd got to the bottom of the convoluted bike path on the other side I had to stop to take a few deep breaths.

We then pedalled through an extremely industrial area. Jim said "anyone with a crane fetish would love it here". I wasn't aware that crane fetishists were a thing, but every day's a school day! We also cycled alongside citrus groves on 2 of the islands - with some of the lemon trees being absolutely laden, so it must be warm there sometimes



We stopped to eat our sandwiches after bridge 3 and for a fruit smoothie (from the wonderful 7/11) at the halfway mark.





In the last 15km there was promise of a 'cyclists rest station' and we were feeling hungry and in need of refilling our water bottles so decided to stop there. By the time we pulled in it was mostly closed up. The food on offer was pretty dire but we needed something and opted to share a large hotdog. The rest area was right next to a beautiful beach but we didn't see anyone brave enough to be on it. We consumed the dog, filled the bottles and set off on the last 12km - which would take us over the longest bridge

....all 4km of it!

It was an awesome sight from a distance and the cycle path going up (and down at the other end) matched in awesomeness. The sun finally reappeared and this was one view that Scotland couldn't match. I took loads of photos because it was all so unusual. It was like a mini spaghetti junction! Unlike the other bridges which had a path that gently zigzagged its way up to the bridge this one spiralled... then zigzagged and finally spiralled to bridge deck level. (Something like this at North Queensferry would be a dream rather than dragging a bike up the rail set on the steep steps up to the Forth Road Bridge.) Once up there the bridge did seem to go on for ever, but somewhere over there was our destination so we set off.

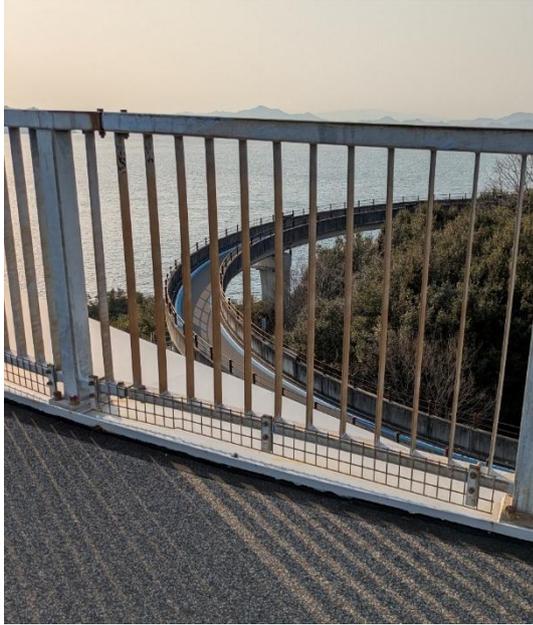






Cycling across the bridge felt neverending but finally we could see the city of Imabari. We'd heard about a forest fire just outside the city and could see it quite clearly. By now my backside was also on fire and my hands and wrists were sore. Jim's left wrist was giving him a lot of pain so he was cycling one handed. We took our time making our way off the bridge and enjoying the last bit of segregated cycle path, and then stood and admired the amazing engineering that had made it possible.





By the time we hauled in at the bike rental return spot at Imabari station we had been on the go for 8 hours! A ridiculous time for what turned out to be 50 miles of cycling.

We managed to return the bikes, fill out a survey, answer a call of nature (and run back to the loo 5 minutes later when I realised I'd left my phone in there!) just before the bus we hoped to catch home arrived. Sadly we were denied access to it as we didn't have a reservation and then had a wee panic about how the hell we were going to get back to our hotel in Onomichi. Google told us there should be a suitable bus in 30 minutes, but we were already getting cold and hungry, and it was going dark. We struck lucky with a kind bus driver who told us where to get off to change for our final bus 'home' and also gave us change when he had previously said we had to pay the exact fare.

The bus dropped us literally outside the hotel and we headed straight into the convenience store next door to buy any food we could lay our hands on. This was consumed at speed as soon as we got to our room and we then had showers, packed our bags for the next day's travelling and fell into bed.

So, the Shimanami Kaido didn't quite live up to the hype. It is definitely a bike ride, but not 'amazing' in our opinion. There certainly wasn't time to explore villages temples and shrines – let alone take time in a hot spring! The views of all the tiny islands definitely have potential to impress, but 90% of the views had a factory, shipyard or some other heavy industry requiring lots and lots of cranes in it. For a while I took carefully framed photos to cut these out but in the end I gave up. You can decide for yourself if you'd call it scenic. Here in Fife we are thoroughly spoiled when it comes to views across water and we are particularly spoiled with views of stunning bridges! The inevitable comparisons were made – and Japan rolled in second best. For us it was another typical day in our trip round Japan - not quite what we expected, but we had a good time anyway.

Don's 2025 rambles (or is it ramblings)

I have sat down a number of times to start writing this article but until now been unable to get started, Saturday morning it was chucking it down . I had made tentative arrangements to meet Kaye at the Kiltmakers cafe in Ladybank .We were going to cycle together to Morwyn's house for lunch and the weekly chinwag about all things bikey . I got a " Dissy" understandable really it was more suited to flippers and snorkel than bikes and gears , more like the Atlantic Ocean than the North of Fife.

On my own I had time to think and what follows is the result

So be prepared to be bored

Like all irresponsible young teenagers(aye). I thought I wanted to ride off with no plans and no real agenda and furthermore like most young teenagers not a care in the world.

First trip was pre new year to rural Aberdeenshire . The trip up the coast to Inverbervie for a stay at a well kent pub.

one event not to be forgotten.

Met a guy on his bike returning from a gig in Edinburgh he was wearing a nice overcoat and fancy shoes no helmet and an open necked shirt.

Whilst I fastened my goretex jacket , adjusted my cycling Shimano shoes and checked with my handlebar navigation device . All costing lots of dosh.....

He took another drag of his joint

and said don't worry man ...we'll get there.... No hassle!

After a few days with the amber nectar .Home was beckoning going via Banff, Inverness,Pitlochry and Aberdour

but hey!

Who decided that it would snow that night .I

Snow or not I was leaving that day ! No more amber nectar for me.

I was bullied into taking a lift to Banff where I booked into a Travelodge.

Bed at 6.30 for the very refreshed or hungover cyclist.

I really did try to cycle the next morning but the snow beat me so caught the train.

Yes ! all the way back to Aberdour.

Wasn't that a great start to my year of aging adventurism.

Club rides Saturdays and every second Wednesday in the winter and every Wednesday during summer , this was and continues to be the back bone of my training .(ha-ha)

I had a number of good interesting rides during January , February and into March Grandtully, Abernethy Outdoor Centre , Round Cairngorms .

amongst many.

A club weekend in Callander with a few trips round different parts of the Trossachs was a trip down memory lane for me as that's where I spent lot's of my misspent youth .

Another day of memories we sailed up Loch Katrine for your information that's where Sir Walter Scott got the inspiration for his poem Lady of the Lake and it's also reputed to be the birthplace of Scottish Tourism.

Some say it's the most expensive ferry ride in Europe it certainly was the coldest that day by far .

After leaving the boat at Stronachlachar we cycled into Aberfoyle on a very wet day , had a coffee break and let our clothes drip on the cafe floor .It's not true the owner had to get the fire brigade to pump the flooding from below our table.

Good interesting ride from Dunfermline to Callander and back those that were there will remember the diversions intended or not

Into the spring, having had a few interesting ride outs to places like North Berwick , Abernethy nature reserve, Glenkinchie distillery , Blackness Brewery .

oh !

and many club members houses for lunch.

All leading up to my training (ha ha) for my end to end junket , it was still in doubt if it would ever happen

well I had no doubts but others questionedif it just pie in the sky.

Another couple of trips round the Tay two bridges and Forth two bridges and my confidence grew to book the train journey to Lands End.

So here we are at Lands Endwho done this to me it's a beautiful day and my mate Johnny's sister who stays in that area came to wave cheerio to her brother.

My god you would have thought we were going to the moon.

Seriously though we had together raised 7k for a local Fife dementia charity STAND it's very close to my heart .

(Coming right up to date I was very pleased to see the proceeds from the recent club ceilidh went to them)...THANK YOU.

At Lands end we wanted to pose at the well kent sign ,you will all know it they wanted £11.00 just to take your own photo ,being tight Scottish gits we did find a way without paying.

A great first day on tracks from the same sign post ,

we were determined to keep away from main roads as much as possible .

Experienced two hours of rain , the first and only rain for the full trip

Cycled our way from Lisskard toward Exeter and on to Taunton we had no real plan and booked one day in advance using mainly Premier Inns and Travelodge .

Towards Bristol and then Gloucester forward to Kidderminster that's where we started to pick up canal paths and followed lots of them as we went towards Wigan .

Big mistake here .

After quite a long day cycling our aim was Wigan Premier Inn, it was about 7pm and twilight was approaching then we discovered it was the wrong Premier Inn , there's three in Wigan .Another five miles to go .

That's when I discovered my friend Johnny was really a very rough file !!!!

Onwards towards Manchester and Carnforth , hey places I know but Mrs Kamoot who was helping us with navigation must have had a bad day because she tried to lead us through a newly ploughed field

(But na probs, for the bouys)

Nearly at the land of the chosen people ,I could smell the fresh light air however it was the start of very strong winds, you know we had to peddle down Shap Fell I am glad I am friends with Octopus energy .(electric bike)

So we're heading for the border of the Best Wee Country in the world spent a little time at Gretna Green , hung about but nobody paid attention to the sign round Johnnys neck (Single and available) so we just swalled our beer and shoved on.

What a night that evening, stayed in a small mansion at Ecclefechan we were the only guests of an old couple (well they were about our age) two cars in their drive a Daimler and a Jaguar sport .For a relatively very small amount of money we were treated like landed gentlemen .

We on our own ground now ,on way to Biggar and then Aberdour stayed overnight at my house .

(I had sold and bought an other whilst cycling through England)

Friends and some club members came to see us off from Aberdour station car park ,probably about 30/40 folk . We collected more donations and about 20 cyclists some joining further up the road went onwards for lunch at Bridge of Earn. Felt very chuffed for the open support

The next two overnights were at Johnny's house in Pitnacree and friends in Kincaig

Through Inversnackie , Dingwall up past the old aluminium works at Alness looking at the views of the oil rigs in the Moray Firth .(ug)

A number of years ago whilst in this area I went into the Altnaharra Hotel and called it the most inhospitable licensed premises in Scotland .

I find myself having to eat my words we had a great overnight stay with good grub and beer.

Cycled up the side of Loch Naver , this had been an industrial area and even today there is still evidence of works .

All was good until the Duke of Sutherland decided to evict the people to make way for sheep . This was one of the major areas for the highland clearances ..

Thurso now ,

We booked a bunkhouse that we had used and enjoyed before ,two nights booked ,what a mistake ownership has changed and new owner does not have the same attention to cleanliness that the previous owner (his Mother) hadso advice do not book into the bunkhouse near the chip shop.

There was another incident. After a disastrous meal in a top local hotel Johnny went to the chip shop for a fish supper to find they had ran out of fish (it was only 7.30 pm) a bag of chips was purchased but went into the bin after about five chips.

Next day was the big push for J.o G. along a bumpy top of Scotland ,my son and his partner were waiting for us a nice surprise welcoming party .

A few drams and videos taken to celebrate our conclusion of the excursion.

A good trip brilliant company and only two hours of rain. Woh!

My next longish ride was to Norfolk to ride the Rebellion Way .

This is a mixed route road and forrest tracks some single track oh! and by mistake five miles on the A16 fast road .

Perhaps the highlight was staying overnight in a very religious bed and breakfast house . Rooms full of bible quotes and church type paintings and drawings . However when it came to earning a crust Jesus did not get in the way they had a wee bar with suggested amounts you had to donate for drinks .

If you want an easy ride on mixed terrain. Then this route might fit your bill.

The year progressed and the next outing other than piddling about Scotland was was to EastYorkshire you know ...it's great being a member of a club when you have a committee that organises a club holiday all you have to do is turn up put your cash in the hands of the organising group and polish your bike .

(because the bike police are in attendance)

I love being amongst people who like organising ,sometimes I like being a sheep.

Good cycling, visited lots of places Humber Bridge, Bridlington,Scarborough, York ,Flambourgh,Hornsea and others

a good time was had by all thanks to the organisers.

Then we had a good trip to the Outer Hebrides car dumped at hotel in Connell Bridge and a rural cycle into Oban to catch the ferry to Castlebay on Barra and then a gradual trip up through the Hebrides taking in most of the islands .Using the ferries and causeways through the Usit's up the Sound of Harris and across to Skye. We cycled Skye's answers to the M1 (funded by money from the EEC) stayed at Broadford aiming for Kylehera and crossing on the ferry to the mainland at Glenelg however the ferry was knackered and we had to take the long way round to overnight at Ratagan Youth Hostel (yes youth)

The next day down through Glen Sheil .Overnight to Invergarry and the next day down the Caledonian Canal to Fort Bill. Then back to the car at Connell Bridge

A very good trip however very disappointed not to tick off Glenelg.

Two weeks later the decision was made to get the tick . So train to Kyle of Lochalsh (on my own this time)cycle across Skye Bridge again stay at Broadford .

What a climb over to Kylehera then ferry across to Glenelg I was not disappointed .

On the way back tried to follow a single track to the ferry at Armadale however it was far to muddy and overgrown so again had to take the long way round on the public road with yet another monster hill .

Ferry over to Mallaig.

That night I stayed in the Fisherman's Mission

(it is like something Terry Waite stayed in all those years ago)

then I had the two wettest days cycling ever ,back to Perth ,chucked it and jumped on the train.

Dampness caused an infection and took two weeks to fully recover.

In my new home came out of my scratcher one morning and decided I had to get on with my years aim.

Booked a passage from Newcastle to Amsterdam for the following week no plan, just follow my instincts.

(to be honest I did know I wanted to go to Santander Spain)

However I did not know how long or how far I was going

But I was going !

The weather going through Holland and Belguim was horrific.

Following a canal through north Belgium Mr. Wind uprooted a whole tree about 100 yds in front of me. That gave me the willies I called into the first property after that and asked if I could leave my bike and get a taxi into Brugge and come back for it in the morning the family agreed it was too dangerous to cycle .

Stayed in a bunkhouse or was it a bordello ,lots went on that night.

Fetchd my bike next morning and continued to Dunkirk and Calais was nearly asking the temporary residents if I could join them on their rubber boat to Dover. Just before I needed to make a decision to throw in the towel ,or not, I checked my communication ,one in particular arrived about five minutes before I was about to book on a channel ferry (KEEP GOING SOUTH BOY)was all it said ,

what a timely message ! Had to come from another Donald .

So I headed along the English Channel. I wonder if that what the Frenchies call it.

The next major decisionwill I go to the Channel Islands that was an easier decision as the weather was getting better . No.....

So down through the spine of France four or five days through farmyards and fields, how at the end of that section I enjoyed some traffic.

Through La Rochelle , there's lots naturalists areas (that's the bare bum brigade) down that way and..... by accident (honest) I ended up in one .

My best friend on the trip was Mrs Kamoot I thought it was her fault but on checking I imputed the wrong information in my telephone .

Well, got stuck in this bare bum land ,it had its own golf course, tennis courts and shopping area , none of it was on my Kamoot ,it was all cul-de -sacs and wee bungalows , after a hour or more I found the fence to get out but it was away too big for me.

I could see my route on the other side of the fence but impossible to get to.

Met a fully clothed guy at the rubbish bins

(Thank god he was English)and asked how I could escape ,he was more interested in 'how I got in (well he would be) he did have his keys on it was freezing .

He followed me in his car ,well I could have been an interloper

Only one expert of the sport and I wish I had not seen him .

I still have nightmares .

Spain and better weather was beckoning and the ascent of the minor slopes of the Europa Mountains ,I even managed to get my wind and waterproofs off.

Followed Mrs Kamoot's routes through these hills some of them very steep and eventually ended in Santander .

Feeling quite chuffed with myself spent a day there before jumping on the ferry back to England .

The story still has a little to go arriving at Waterloo Station I had to cycle to Kings Cross to catch the train home .

It's no surprise to me why cyclists get a bad name in the press,

there seems to be little understanding between cyclists and motorists in London ,my experience was that in the main the cyclist were the guilty parties.

A good trip all on my own took nearly a month and I enjoyed the journey but did not give myself enough time to enjoy the places I visited ,I am not a good tourist the journey meant more to me than the places I visited .

One last point . I found a b&b for 18€ the more usual price being 70 +€

I was intrigued what will I get for 18€ .

In short not much ! depends how you interpret this paragraph 😊

It was a really small terraced house in the middle of town the blurb said I had to bring my own dinner and the lady would cook it .

I sat down at a card table with the two owners ,in a kitchen that was only a little bigger than the table.

They had no English and my command of Flemish was zero ,so we communicated through the apps. on our telephones , the husband was more interested in the monster sized telly than communicating with a bikey boy.

When you pay the regular price for accommodation it's taken for granted that the beds will be clean and your accommodation will be tidy but for 18€well

Breakfast was a half baguette ,two spoons of jam and a mug of coffee .

So take care when offered a what appears a bargain.

The next 36 hours was difficult I had what is politely known as Delhi Belly or in this case the Belgium Blast .

Not good at any time but on a bike special care must be observed.

So my advice . Pay the regular price and stay healthy.

Well that was my cycle year for 2025 . 8,500 miles not bad .

What goes 2006 Probably more of the same .

If you still awake and have read all of this dribble then perhaps I owe you a drinkthanks for reading.

2026 is getting off to a busy start.

Dates for your diaries

January 27th Bowling at the Hollywood Bowl

March 6th George Berwich Slide show Markinch Village Hall

March 21st Club Annual Lunch Sands Hotel Burntisland

April 24th Group Weekend Speybank in Kincaig

May 22 to 25th KM Rally Penpont