

Issue 587 February 2023

# Cranks

## Volume 49

The magazine of  
**Deeside Thistle Cycling Club**

Sponsored by:

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**Tierney Strachan**  
PROCESS CONTROL ENGINEERING

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**Current Membership 569 (594)**  
**SCU Membership 291 (294)**

### Editorial:

It's a when o' years since I'd my first experience of a major computer crash. Devastated summed it up and what a joy when the company in London couriered me through a box of CDs with most of the club's data rescued. The discs are still there, tucked out of sight on a shelf.

Then, at the end of January when Elaine and I made our annual pilgrimage to the cultural event of the year, Celtic Connections, the same thing happened.

I'd get Notes out before breakfast and have the rest of the day free to explore Kelvin Grove and, in the Hunterian Museum, examine some of Kelvin's inventions. Only, the computer wouldn't start up. The blue screen still glared after we'd downed our cereal and fruit juice.

There might have been a bit of troubled conscience knowing that I'd not been able to send out the usual Monday morning blurb but far from being devastated, it came as a relief to know that I didn't have to operate a keyboard. Squaring my shoulders, I headed out Bath Street to visit the Suffragette Oak in Kelvin Grove.

The data is securely backed up, so it didn't bother me when Oliver, of Bordersearch, a small business hidden down a lane in Castle Douglas condemned the machine.

We were so intrigued by the Hunterian displays; time ran out too quickly and Kelvin's genius will need to be explored another day.

### PHILOSOPHER'S CORNER

We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing - *George Bernard Shaw*

Do you have a view on life? Why not submit your favourite few words of wisdom for public consumption in this exclusive corner of your magazine. Send now to Sandy Lindsay, Rowan Cottage, Inveramsay, Inverurie, AB51 5DQ or email [knockies@deeside.org](mailto:knockies@deeside.org)

### Eric Thomson

For long a friend of our club, Eric Thomson, who looked after Garlogie Hall, has died.

Living in the cottage beside the hall he was always on hand to help us out with our lets, and even after he retired, he would ensure our access went unhindered.

His funeral service takes place at Kirkton of Skene Church on Friday 24 February at 11.00am.

### Youth and Junior Update

The second Johnstone Jets Monsters of Track meet took place on Saturday 11 February. Seven DTCC youths ranging from youth C through to youth B took part. The day saw some great racing with all riders benefiting from additional track time

*Lyndsay Aitken*

### SCNEG Update

**Provisional Calendar for Scottish events in 2023 is [here](#).**  
Dates may change and events be added.

### 1/ Timing system training

On 28<sup>th</sup> Feb at Kingswells, timing guru, Brian Gourlay is putting on a class on how to operate the timing system we use at our local races. If you are interested in finding out how it works and helping time at events in the future this free course is the one for you. The training session is free and is open to new timers or those that have used the system before and just need a refresher.

There will be a practical training on the evening using the system. We have just paid for the next five-year subscription for the system so it's going to be around for a while.

In addition, there will be a further practical part of learning at the Haddo youth dirt crit grass route races currently planned for the 5<sup>th</sup> March.

This is part of the regional development of volunteers catchily named "pedal it forward" for those that have enjoyed cycle sport and want to put something back into the sport we all love.

### 2/ Presentation of 2022 championships.

The presentation of the 2022 regional championship trophies will be held after the Bob Souter 10 mile in Pitmedden on 16<sup>th</sup> April at Café 48. This is a chance to honour all those BAR champions and road race champions etc from last year. This is the first presentation we have been able to hold since 2019.

### 3/ Time trial group

A new whatsapp group has been set up to promote, organise and coordinate resources for time trials. This will mirror the one set up a few years ago for road race development. If you want to be included in this discussion group, please get in touch.

### 4/ Neah Evans



At the AGM it was agreed to present Neah with an award for her outstanding achievements in 2022 (which continue this year). Bob Gibson has purchased a lovely looking trophy, and this will be awarded to Neah when she is home in early March.

### 5/ Women's development

We are still looking for someone who will come on to the SCNEG development group to help us look at women's cycle sport and racing (in all disciplines) to see how we can develop that over the next few years. Again, if you are interested in helping out with this development please get in touch.

### 6/ Limitless

The new British Cycling Limitless programme starts soon, and it is hoped that the local clubs will be involved in cooperation with Disability Sport Grampian with sessions for those on adaptive bikes and help with pathways and sport opportunities for all those with disabilities.

### 7/ Strategic development and succession planning

It's been some years since the original SCNEG strategic plan was put in place by the group and Peter Clark. At the 2022 AGM this was discussed, and it was agreed a new strategy is required to take us forward for the next five to ten years. Over the next few weeks, we will be putting together a meeting to start to put together the bones of what that looks like. If you have ideas about where you think the sport should go in our area this will be the meeting you need to attend. Look out for invite.

In addition this is my last year as chair of SCNEG and so we need to look at who would like to take this role on and motivate the future of cycle sport in our area.

*Colin Allanach - [colinallanach@aol.com](mailto:colinallanach@aol.com)*

## Cycle Ride Leader Courses

As part of our approved plans under the Community Cycling Fund via the 2023 UCI World Cycling Championships in Glasgow and across Scotland. Cycle Aberdeenshire will be hosting a number of "Cycle Ride Leader" courses in partnership with Cycling Scotland between January and March 2023 <https://www.cycling.scot/what-we-do/training/cycle-ride-leader>.

We would like some of these courses or spaces, depending on the levels of interest, to be available to community groups from the Aberdeenshire area, to enhance what they already provide to their group. Access to these courses is free and we are running a course on: **Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> February 2023 from 9am-5pm at the Deveron Centre in Banff.**

If your Aberdeenshire based club/group/organisation would like to be considered for places on this course, which is for a maximum of 8 people per course, please email [malcolm.grant@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:malcolm.grant@aberdeenshire.gov.uk). Further course dates are planned and at this time we anticipate space on courses at: Huntly on 26<sup>th</sup> February, Alford on 4<sup>th</sup> March and two further community based courses should there be

enough interest. Again please contact [malcolm.grant@aberdeenshire.gov.uk](mailto:malcolm.grant@aberdeenshire.gov.uk) if these dates or future courses are of interest. In addition, there is some funding for the BASP Outdoors First Aid training although places will be limited and the normal First Aid requirements (Emergency First Aid) are required as a baseline for any Cycle Ride Leaders so please factor that into any planning.

## NEW BC Pathway for Coach Training and Development

You will all be aware that we have a constant need for new Coaches. The Coach education process of recent has been lengthy, costly and bureaucratic to newcomers. None of which has helped you help us.

We have just had a webinar with the relevant team at BC and the new pathway will be rolled out this year. This will be radically different, far more online, modular and cheaper. There will be a basic introductory course, Activity Leader, then Trainee status and a formal Coach award. After this will be Performance Coach and even Chartered status for those wish to complete the whole process.

Full details will be shared shortly - but after 12 years of my own CPD and training in this domain it feels like a refreshing and timely change. Anything that enables more people to come and put more Youth and Juniors on bikes the better for us all...

*Sam Long*

## Total Endurance Winter Talks

We are pleased to be able to restart our Free winter training Talks

Click [here](#) for more information on each of the topics and to book your place

All talks are on a Monday evening from  
19:00 - 20:00

We will be announcing dates for our 1/2-day swim and run workshops very soon so keep an eye out for dates

## Commissaire Opportunity

Ready to start the journey to become a commissaire? Events don't run without them. Want to be part of the wider biking community.

Find out more about becoming a commissaire and the training you undergo here. [Trainee Commissaire course \(britishcycling.org.uk\)](http://Trainee%20Commissaire%20course%20(britishcycling.org.uk)).

If anyone's interested, please contact [volunteer@scottishcycling.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@scottishcycling.org.uk)





To get things moving, the MidSummer Beer Happening has put tickets on sale for its hugely popular Cycle Sportive, so cyclists can get on their bikes now and book their places.

Starting and finishing in Stonehaven's Baird Park, home of the Midsummer Beer Happening, with four different routes to accommodate all abilities of riders whilst providing all a rewarding challenge

#### Routes

Gravel route	40 miles
Undo	55 miles
Redo	62 miles
Dinaedo	100 miles

So, get Thursday, June 15th to Saturday, June 17th in your diary now – but that's not all.

Here's another Save The Date card for your calendar – daily tickets and weekend packages will be on sale very soon from January 27th.

Robert Lindsay, organiser of the Happening, said: "Just like everyone else, our volunteers have been busy working hard putting together this year's Midsummer Beer Happening in Stonehaven. After all, there's nothing like looking forward to midsummer to drive away the bleak midwinter blues.

"In fact, we're so excited about how it's shaping up we wanted to give everyone the great news about when and where it will be – look for our stunning marquee in Baird Park again.

"Other Happening fans – old and new – won't have long to wait until they can start grabbing their tickets for the glorious three-day event which is a celebration of the best in beer, food, and music, staged in a purpose-built marquee.

"The Happening 2023 is shaping up to be the best yet," he said. "We will have more than 150 beers hand-selected from the finest breweries, plus ciders.

Robert said that last year, the first Happening since the pandemic, was a glorious return with more than 6,000 guests joining in the party and raising £65,000 for local charities in the process.

"A high bar that has been set, but we're aiming to make this year's Happening simply unforgettable. So, get those dates in the diary and we will see you this Midsummer."

For more information about the Midsummer Beer Happening in Stonehaven and to book places for the Sportive, to be held on Saturday June 17, go to [msbh.co.uk](http://msbh.co.uk)

## New Members

The following new or returning members have joined in recent weeks.

3096	Ollie Grantham	Inverurie	14
3097	Richard Colliar	Stonehaven	50

Any friend, family member, work colleague, who is interested in cycling but not involved with a club, should be dropped the hint to look at [www.deeside.org/members](http://www.deeside.org/members) or to email [members@deeside.org](mailto:members@deeside.org) asking for information.

## First Aid Course 12th/13th April 2023

Garioch Sports Centre Inverurie

As part of our next phase of Club Support we are to again partner with Grampian Training Services for them to deliver an HSE recognised first aid course for club reps at Garioch Sports Centre Inverurie.

Course - Emergency First Aid at Work-on the 12th and 13th April 6.30pm-9.30pm each evening. Limit of 12 delegates.

Cost- The cost will be £35 per person payable in advance once we confirm the allocation of a place.

More information on the course content is available on the GTS web site with a link below.

<http://grampiantrainingservices.co.uk/emergency-first-aid-at-work-course/>

The courses are accredited First Aid Industry Body (FAIB) and Federation of First Aid Training Organisations (FOFATO).

## Trainee Commissaire Courses in 2022

British Cycling have released a number of online Trainee Commissaire Courses in 2022.

Circuit	x 3 courses
MTB XC	x 2 courses
MTB Gravity	x 1 course
Road	x 3 courses
Track	x 1 course

If anyone is interested, they should get in touch with Colin Esslemont (SC Regional Commissaire Coordinator) on [montysbicycleworks@btinternet.com](mailto:montysbicycleworks@btinternet.com) & Ashley Ryan (SC Event Workforce officer) [events@scottishcycling.org.uk](mailto:events@scottishcycling.org.uk) and we can arrange for them to link up with an active official to chat more about the role and send on sign up links.  
*Colin Esslemont*

## Coaching Courses

Those members keen to get involved with coaching can find details of upcoming courses and funding opportunities on the SC web site. Go here:

<https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/scotland/coaching>



Have you paid club fees for this year? No? This could be your last copy of Cranks – go to [www.deeside.org/join](http://www.deeside.org/join)

## Spond Guide Update - Group Codes

If you are already registered in Spond and in one DTCC group, you can join another with these links (or use the “Enter Code” option in the App).

**DonsideBunch** <https://group.spond.com/WWDYZ>

**Banchory** <https://group.spond.com/TYLWP>

**DTCC MTB** <https://group.spond.com/MRFCH>

**LeggartTerrace** <https://group.spond.com/AGTNP>

Click on the group(s) you want to be member of, and the ride admin will accept you.

Link to PDF Spond guide: [http://deeside.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/DTCC\\_Spond\\_and\\_Ride\\_Leader\\_Guide.pdf](http://deeside.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/DTCC_Spond_and_Ride_Leader_Guide.pdf)

Link to PPT Spond guide: [http://deeside.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/DTCC\\_Spond\\_and\\_Ride\\_Leader\\_Guide.pptx](http://deeside.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/DTCC_Spond_and_Ride_Leader_Guide.pptx)

*Peter Smart*

## Winter Rides

Donside Bunch Winter Rides take place Sundays from Kintore. Plans for this winter are two groups:

Steady (15/16mph) - 2.5hrs

Faster (17mph+) - 3hrs

Pitch yourself into the correct group and it'll be a no drop ride.

Usual rules - mudguards preferred, and front and back flashers strongly recommended. Rides will be managed through [SPOND](#). If not already registered on SPOND go [here](#)

## Saturday Morning Group Rides - Leggart Tce

Over autumn and into winter, the Saturday morning group rides from Leggart Terrace will start at the later time of 09:00. Alan Campbell will take a steady group on the ride while Steve Brechin will lead a slightly brisker group if numbers allow.

The 54mile/87km route, known within the club as The Chairman's Classic, takes in some of the best climbs in the local area. You can view the route here: [The Chairman's Classic | 86.7 km Cycling Route on Strava](#).

It's a no drop ride and all are welcome. Email Steve Brechin on [DTCC-Banchory.Saturday@outlook.com](mailto:DTCC-Banchory.Saturday@outlook.com) or look for us on [Spond](#).

Please consider the use of mud guards on your bike until we get into the better weather again.

## Sunday Banchory Rides

The rides will start 10:00 am (sharp) from Banchory Townhall (carpark opposite town hall). The rides will be published on SPOND, and we would ask you to sign up for the ride via SPOND, so we know who is riding and we have your emergency contact details.

You can download SPOND on your smart phone or access any computer or tablet via: <https://spond.com/welcome>.

To join the Banchory Rides group please sign up via: <https://group.spond.com/TYLWP>

There are other rides through the week and sometimes adhoc meetups, so it is worth joining.

The route will be published on SPOND and will always include a coffee stop. Distance is around 50 miles.

We will try and run two groups. Espresso and Latte. Espresso will be a ride aiming for 18 to 20 mph average. Latte will be no drop ride riding at the pace of the slowest rider, but hopefully around 16 mph, or slower if needed. Espresso will set off first, anyone dropped from Espresso can drop back to Latte. If we do not have enough for two groups, it will be a no drop ride. All levels of rider welcome

## KNOCKBURN LOCH MANAGEMENT

John Huston Knockburn Site Manager, Knockburn Loch, Strachan, AB31 6LL [info@knockburn.co.uk](mailto:info@knockburn.co.uk), 01330 822234 / 07741314999 [www.knockburn.co.uk](http://www.knockburn.co.uk). You can like us on [FaceBook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#)

## Ride Etiquette Document

You are reminded that a paper detailing the etiquette to follow when on club/training runs has been prepared and is [here](#) for your interest. The document is posted on the club's website and links will start to appear on club publications so that you can refer to it. It will also be highlighted to new members.

## Zwift Sunday Club Endurance Ride

Created and administered by Simon Stromberg

We now have a Sunday Club Endurance Ride on Zwift, with different groups at a different pace. Details [here](#). This is run in partnership with ZwiftScotland group.



[ZWIFT.COM](http://ZWIFT.COM)

## Youth Free Membership

Deeside Thistle Cycling Club is delighted to offer free membership to new youth riders for their first year. If you would like to take advantage of this offer, please see: <http://www.deeside.org/membership.html>





### Britain's National Cyclists' Association

Working for all Cyclists

Newcomers are welcome particularly on the

Morning/Slower Full Day runs.

Medium and Faster Full Day runs are for the more experienced

For more information visit our website:

<http://www.ctcgrampian.org.uk>

Chairman	John B	01224 571984
Secretary	Sheila	01224 639012
Runs Co-ordinator	John S	01224 790269
Social Secretary	Heather	01224 699399
Treasurer	John C	
Membership	John T	01224 639012

### Right to Ride Representative

North Aberdeenshire	Rod	01467 623317
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### Runs Co-ordinators

Try Cycling Rides	Moira D	
Morning Runs	Cindy	01224 310719
Slower Full Day Runs	Heather	01224 699399
Medium Full Day Runs	Sheila	01224 63901
Faster Full Day Runs	John S	01224 790269

Following guidance from our Covid 19 Officer, Rod Adams, the following has been agreed to ensure that our runs will operate in a Covid secure fashion.

Our risk assessment has been uploaded to the CTC Grampian website: <http://www.ctcgrampian.org.uk/> and participation in club rides will be subject to all participants having familiarised themselves with, and agreed to comply with, the terms of the risk assessment.

To be Track and Trace compliant, we are asking all participants to arrive with a small (business card size) paper with their name and contact details. These papers will be collected by the Ride Leader at the start of the run in a plastic bag and held securely for 21 days, before being destroyed. This requirement will be incorporated into the risk assessment and displayed on the Runs list page of the club website. **“No ticket, no ride”!**

In addition, all riders continue to be required to carry a Next of Kin card in the event of an accident. These are available from the Ride Leader and/or Secretary.

Newcomers: We welcome newcomers, particularly on the ‘Try Cycling’ and ‘Morning’ runs. You do not need to be a member of the Cycling UK to join our runs, but after 3 runs you would be expected to join Cycling UK.

Runs start promptly at the time stated. Distances are calculated from the meeting place. Bring spare inner tube, puncture repair kit, tools, wet weather gear, some food, drink, and LIGHTS where relevant. It is recommended that all cyclists carry a First Aid kit.

Try Cycling: rides are intended for those who have not been on the saddle for a while and for those who want a quiet ride around Aberdeen. These are easy rides followed or interrupted by a coffee stop, families are welcome.

Morning Runs: These runs are at a relatively slow pace and are usually about 25–30 miles long. A coffee or picnic stop will usually be made.

Full Day Runs: These are all-day runs intended for experienced cyclists. A coffee stop and lunch/picnic stop will be made. Distances and speeds vary as outlined below:

Slower Full Day Runs: Slowish pace. Distance normally 30-45 miles.

Medium Full Day Runs: Moderate pace. Distance normally 45-60 mls.

Faster Full Day Runs: Fast pace. Distance normally 60-75 miles (\* runs are longer).

Pub Runs: Start prompt at the time stated, to reach the pub by 21:00. LIGHTS

### Runs

The full calendar of runs is available here:

<https://ctcgrampian.org.uk/runs-list/>

### Club Mountain Bike Rides

There's long been a need to hold regular mountain bike rides for club members, but the question was how to achieve this. As with everything there will be a wide range of abilities, bikes, fitness, and locality within the club so one ride group won't satisfy everyone, every week.

With all that in mind can you comment if you are interested with the following:

- What level/type of rider are you?
- What kind of rides would you like to see the club put on?
- Where are you located and where do you predominately ride?
- Do you have any qualifications?
- Would you be interested in leading a ride?

You can register here <https://group.spond.com/WWDYZ> and comments, please, to Neil on [mtb@deeside.org](mailto:mtb@deeside.org)

### Deeside Thistle Annual Subscriptions

Please go here to renew your membership:

<http://deeside.org/join/>

You may have children and spouse/partner listed as members so don't forget to include them when renewing - or if they are not already listed now's your chance to get them on the club register



## 25 Years Ago

### SCOTTISH TRIATHLON ASSOCIATION

In an effort to make it easier for triathletes to join our Club and take part in specialised cycle competition, in particular our Evening League, an approach was recently made to the STA insurers.

It was felt that if the STA membership could provide an equal cover to what the SCU membership does a cross over might take place. Unfortunately, though Duncan Roberts, Secretary for the STA was hopeful, Sedgewicks of Glasgow, the STA insurers, said their policy would not extend to cover competition in another body's events.

Efforts are not yet exhausted. There are many triathletes who benefit from being involved in our races and mixing with us during training, etc. Equally, club cyclists also benefit from the exchange. The STA will be written formally and with a little good luck they may be able to do some persuasion where we have failed.

### Club Kit Arrival

The latest Pactimo kit order is now available to collect from Tierney Strachan, 12 Greenbank Place, East Tullos, AB12 3BT. Normal office hours apply. Please ring the bell at our Goods-In door and announce that you are here to collect Deeside Kit with your name.

If the small roller shutter door is closed - please ring the office number 01224 295000. If the main gates are closed, we are closed, simples.

If you are in any doubt about the sizes you have ordered, let me know and possibly we can do a swap or refund. I can post out to those that want it. Let me know and I can arrange. You can easily buy postage online and send it to me; I need to give you weights and dimensions if you want to do this.

*Best Regards, Jon Strachan*  
([jas@tierney-strachan.co.uk](mailto:jas@tierney-strachan.co.uk))

### For Sale

- 1 I have a Buxumbox Tourmalet (size H1) which I am not using, and I was wondering if the club or any of the club members would be interested. This one: <https://buxumbox.com/product/tourmalet-box/>. I purchased it brand new, and it is in great condition, I have only used it in one trip. It is currently configured to accommodate a disc brake frame (thru axles 12x100 and 12x142) but I am also including the OEM quick releases kit for rim brake frames, along with the two original wheel bags, crush pole, etc. The colour is the same as the one in the website. Asking price £500. Feel free to contact me on [eloi.gispert@gmail.com](mailto:eloi.gispert@gmail.com) if you have any questions or need more info *Eloi Gispert*
- 2 An Alba team bike used last season is now for sale. It's a size 56 Trek Emonda SLR7's (eTap). If anyone is interested or wants any more information, they can contact Bob Lyons on [bob@alba-rt.comx](mailto:bob@alba-rt.comx)

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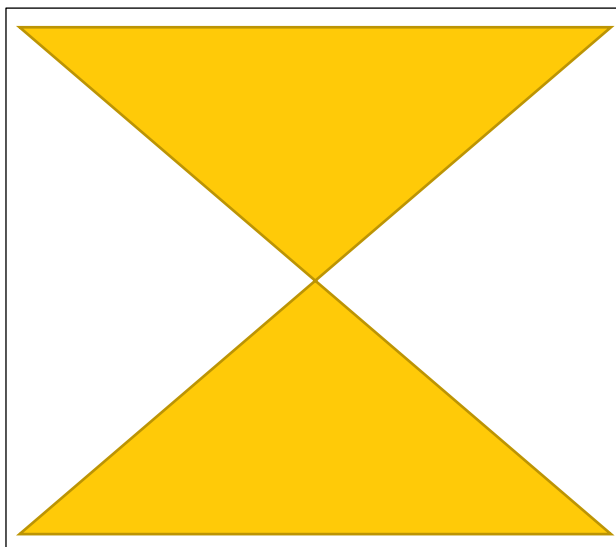
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## Historical Reminiscences

### (Part 53)

The ferryman, 80 years old, had to make two trips across Loch Lomond, the bicycles precariously laid in a small rowing boat pulled behind the ferry.

Ascending steeply through Glen Douglas from Inverbeg hostel it came as a surprise to find a high security fence circling the hill. Umpteen bunkers dug into the hillside looked ominous and posted at frequent intervals along this fence were signs warning off trespassers stating that guard dogs patrolled the perimeter.

Almost unaware of the nuclear submarine base at Holyloch it came as a shock to see the extent of the establishment.

Loch Restil lies at the top of the climb from Arrochar. In this loch Andy Gibb celebrated his birthday. We dumped him with due ceremony in the water. It was intended that later in the day a cake should be bought, but later in the day no shops were passed so he was left wanting. Anyway, as is often said, it is the thought.....

Miles of water towards Tarbert sparkled in the blazing sun and soon, as the sun reached its zenith we'd stripped to the waist and revelled in the heat.

A jet screamed up the sea loch and minutes later returned at the same wavetop height.

The traffic on this road was practically non-existent but at one point a large lorry came from behind and we stopped to let it through. However, because for much of the time it was travelling near our speed, we were soon close behind. We stayed there and for several miles had an enjoyable ride which helped us over the occasional bumps,

The midges were really vicious in Tighnabraich and it took superhuman tolerance to make repairs to Andy Gibb's bike which had shed a lot of spokes along the way.

A spanner for the block remover was manufactured from the holes in a cast handle on a boat trailer.

An itinerant, camped with his family by the side of the road, overlooking the magnificent views of the Kyles of Bute, came over and damned all Englishmen, damned all those who planted trees and destroyed the crofts, damned all those who looked down on the tinker and damned the landlords who had driven the highlanders from their glens. Descending to Loch Eck we scooted on to Strachur and north ahead of Loch Fyne. Cries of "you will never make it to Inveraray by four" created an increase in speed.

At five minutes to four the bridge before Inveraray was in view and with a minute to go the sign flashed by.

Inveraray YH is purpose built, replacing the earlier hostel which was one of the SYHA's originals. Full of cyclists, some of the older gents using this eventide home have been coming to the Inveraray hostel since 1934.

Castle Stalker jutted out of Loch Laich as we proceeded north towards Ballachulish.

Three others were joining the group today, Keith Milne, Colin Gray and Philip Kelman, and just on 5.00pm as we

cycled into Fort William, these three were met coming south. Metaphorical arms wrapped round my party would surely protect them in the days ahead and the expected increase in pace.

Glen Nevis YH has been modernised to Grade 1 standard. It is posh by far and the warden is quite pleasant and helpful. He loaned tools to repair various bikes. There are duvet covers in the dormitories and as usual the beds are far too warm.

In the evening it rained heavily. It is very misty and overcast. Ben Nevis cannot be seen.

Our party set off 12 strong, on the next day, a Sunday, to follow the old Jacobite trail along Loch Eil to Glenfinnan at the head of Loch Shiel. Drizzle chased past the Outward-Bound School at Arnat and it began to rain quite heavily at the National Trust office at Glenfinnan.

A visit was made to the viaduct carrying the rail-line over Glenfinnan. On then, via Loch Eilt to the head of Loch Ailort, a sea loch with a large fish farm.

Morning coffee was enjoyed in the ship lounge and after landing at Armadale a tail wind and brisk pace took us past road signs painted out and re-sprayed with untidy notices in Gaelic.

Near Broadford the group split. Those requiring repairs to machines and bodies headed for Kyleakin while the rest went over the steep climb to Kylerhea.

The ferry at Kylerhea was reached and we rode straight on. With only a few minutes to wait we sailed across the narrow neck at the head of the Sound of Sleat to the Glen Elg pier. Gemini bobbed and displayed in the water round the boat while jellyfish billowed and closed in the swell.

At Davidson's, the grocers in Glen Elg, where a touring party had been thrown out several years previously for eating in the shop and delaying the shop keeper who was playing in goals for the local shinty/football team against Lochcarron, dinner was bought and Mrs Davidson, very kindly and pleasantly described knowledgeably the crossing from the Glen Elg Broch to Moyle at the foot of Mam Ratagan as reasonable rough stuff. A visit was made to the Brochs, two spectacular Pictish buildings some 2000 years old.

Ratagan Forest is rapidly being sawn down with great swathes of recumbent trees on the hillside.

Kenny and Ian rode the road while the rest of us did the roughstuff. The two roadmen waited a long time on top of Mam Ratagan but once we were together, Colin having stormed to the top far in advance of our group, we had a wonderful misty view along Loch Duich, to where the track from Glen Licht and Glen Affric descended from the clouds. Wonderful memories of a past tour also came down from those clouds.

Enjoying an easy run through Glen Torridon the car towing the boat, seen first at Mallaig and many times later, was met again at a layby in the Ben Eighe Nature Reserve. This time they'd a puncture and cheery words of wisdom were given free by the passing cyclists. Cheery Harvey Smiths were given in reply.



A quick visit was made to Blanco del Alba to replenish the cash stocks. Then into rain we headed to Poolewe and the famous Inverewe Gardens. A terrible downpour that lashed like hail battered us on one descent but cleared as we reached the National Trust property, a square mile of very fertile garden plucked from the barren rock over a hundred years ago. Plants from all over the globe survive successfully on this Gulf Stream warmed and sheltered headland at the foot of Loch Ewe.

With plenty of time, on this, the twelfth day of the tour, a visit was paid to John Connel's workshop at Aultbea. He builds top class but expensive Wester Ross framesets. The shop, well equipped, has been on the west coast for several years. The frames he builds are superior but then, so are the prices. The Highlands and Islands Development Board backed him in the venture, but he is now selling up and moving to Yorkshire.

Skirting Gruinard Bay with that awful anthrax ridden island set less than half a mile offshore we passed through the unimaginatively named hamlets of First Coast and Second Coast.

Then taking some roughstuff across Dundonnell Hill we reached Altnaharrie Inn on Loch Broom. Here, with the bikes precariously perched on the cabin roof of the small motorboat we made the crossing to Ullapool.

Showing some interest in learning more about the Culloden Moor battle site I took Andy Gibb there while the others continued towards Grantown on Spey.

Eerie feelings were experienced as we walked round the graves. A visit to the Cumberland Stone completed the tour.

Wending our way through back roads to Dulcie Bridge on Dava Moor with a following wind we climbed to the moor summit and sped south past Lochindorb to Duthil.

The others had a pleasant fast run through Glen Moy to Carrbridge. Turning east we were only 10 minutes apart reaching Grantown on Spey.

The last day dawned. Tinged with sadness breakfast was eaten in silence. As if realising the importance of not destroying the moment the warden stole over to the table and left the hostel cards in a single pile. In a whisper he said that he was just going out for a while and wouldn't be back before we left.

Tarmacadam took us well along Avon valley but eventually changed to rough track and continued that way to Inchrory Lodge. An eagle flew overhead harassed by a crow. From Inchrory we turned east and on a much rougher track headed for Cockbridge. and when Delnadamp Lodge was reached tarmacadam reappeared.

[Om mani padme hum](#) - [Mani Walls](#) are built regularly in the Himalaya along roadways and by rivers. They are constructed in reverence to Buddhist spirits.

Alastair and I tried as best we could to follow the ethos of this religion. In conversation with Chattra we questioned him about the requirement to pass the walls to the left, to circumnavigate them clockwise. What if we failed, made a mistake, didn't realise it was a Mani Wall and passed to the right.

He smiled, hesitated, then, "*Buddhists understand that you don't understand.*"

Some weeks later we visited a craft shop in the Thamel region of Kathmandu. Buying souvenir Thankas the shopkeeper, once the deal had been sealed, told us that we were his only customers that day. He could have told us at the start of our bargaining, and we'd have paid more.

When asked to describe a Buddhist he explained that they had compassion for all living things and went on to explain that if a spider crawled across the table in front of us, he'd not crush it, but lift it gently and release it outside.

In Bhiretanti we listened to [Panko Pat](#) booming out from the radio in the room below ours. This reminded us of the Nepali porters congaing through the streets of Namche Bazar. In fine voice they'd celebrated their own culture before coping with the strain of carrying loads for the trekking companies.

The air, filled with the sound of Tilley lamps, the hiss of pressure cookers and the rush of white waters in the Bhurungdi Khola, was hot. Sweat dripped off my nose and expanded in a grey smudge on my note pad.

From the corner of my eye, I sensed a movement. A large spider stretched its legs and ambled along the floor against the wall. Big, huge might describe it better, the size of a mouse, I'd take a photograph for posterity. Camera at the ready I knelt down and moved in. To gauge the size of the creature something recognisable needed to be in the picture. What better object than my own finger? Pointing purposefully as I moved closer, I watched the sausage sized finger in the viewfinder. The spider began to appear in the frame and just as the shutter clicked I saw it launch itself at my digit.

The air, filled with dust billowing behind the interminable garishly decorated Shok Leyland lorries, was hot. Sweat streaked rivulets down our cheeks as we laboured on the climbs.

Taking frequent stops to rehydrate, at one of the roadside stalls we sheltered from the sun, under trees.

As the dust cleared from another truck which had thundered past we could see across the road, a tree cloaked in webbing. Like something from a Hallowe'en party, the branches were festooned.

Looking closer we could see the webbing was no more nor less than webbing. Concealed behind the layers of white silk, hundreds of spiders clung to the limbs of the tree. They were gigantic, the size of large bats. **Roughstuffer**