

10 MAY 2019

THE DUMFRIES & GALLOWAY WEEKEND

Day 1

29 riders and 6 pillions were heading north once more to Dumfries & Galloway. This was the tenth of the Hatters and Mancunium Chapter weekends, but by popular request (Spenner), Jackie & I arranged another trip to Scotland.

Now bearing in mind that on our last visit three years ago, two of our number got married at Gretna Green, we were never going to beat it, so we looked to the scenery in the hope of a draw.



It didn't look all that promising as we pulled out of Stockport on Friday morning with the threat of rain hanging over us all the way up the A65 to the Lake District. When we crossed the M6, the rain duly obliged and gave us a reminder of how the lakes are regularly (very regularly) topped up.



Never mind, lunch at Wilf's in Staveley cheered everyone up with large portions and pronto service.

Next, the Kirkstone Pass with some of the most spectacular views in the whole of the country when you can actually see them. Fortunately, the rain had petered out by the time we passed Ullswater and we hit the M6 at Penrith in bright sunshine.

Onwards and upwards to our coffee and cake stop at Laing's on the A7, just off the M6 at junction 44. Great cakes and great service, this jewel of friendliness should be on any biker's list of stop offs on the way up to Scotland.

Only one pie fan was disappointed as they had run out of Lemon Meringue Pie just as she got to the counter. Never mind, there's always tomorrow.

The last leg of the day, again in bright sunshine, took us up the A7, through Longtown, then left through Gretna to our hotel at Dumfries.



By the time we'd got our first beer, the rain had been long forgotten. And that was the last we saw of it for the whole weekend. (The rain, not the beer.)

Day 2 Scenic Saturday

When Jackie & I reccied the area a few weeks earlier, we decided to take in a road we'd used many years beforehand, the A708 between Moffat and Selkirk passing St Mary's Loch. This is a beautiful road with gorgeous scenery, very few other vehicles and a biker friendly café halfway down overlooking the Loch. And the sun kept on shining.



After dragging the group away to see more gobsmacking views, we headed on through Selkirk and Peebles before another coffee and cake stop at the Big Red Barn. Apart from great cakes and tiffin, their specialty is pies, as those at the front of the queue will testify. Unfortunately, our disappointed pie fan from the previous day wasn't at the right end of the queue and once again dipped out.



We were heading back towards Dumfries after our break, through Biggar and on to the Dalveen Pass, another helping of hardly used, stunningly beautiful road.



We did around 150 miles on our 'Scenic Saturday' in wall to wall sunshine and certainly no-one complained about the roads or the scenery.

Jackie & I would call that a result.

Day 3

Heading home and the sun was still shining.

After another great breakfast at the Dumfries Premier Inn, we took the direct route to Westmorland Services on the M6 at Tebay.

Around half the group had to get back home the quick way for work commitments or football matches. This was the last day of the season and it was going down to the last whistle.



Those that weren't encumbered by work or bothered about football took the pretty way, heading off the motorway, across to Sedbergh and down to Kirkby Lonsdale, where we rejoined the A65. We had a quick splash and dash at Settle, before our last highlight of the weekend, an ice cream from Hudson's at Chatburn.

By the time we said our final goodbyes at Rising Bridge only a few hardy souls were left. We may not have had a wedding this time around, but most agreed it was a great weekend.

Special mention must be made to all those who went above and beyond the call of duty to pull it all together.

The road crew of Jackie sweeping and Arthur as backmarker worked wonders on collecting some very challenging drop-offs. Special mention must also go to Dave Barr, John Ryan, Pete Wilson and Nev Wood who took some of the trickier drops to make the weekend such a success. Nobody went the wrong way or got lost over the course of the whole 500 mile weekend. Thanks to all concerned.

As always, the hotel and dining arrangements (and parking) were perfectly sorted by our very own domestic goddess, Jan Arrowsmith. Again, big thanks Jan.

Finally, and as always, it was the Chapter members who supported the weekend, didn't get lost, didn't fall off, didn't (quite) run out of fuel and didn't complain (too much) that made it so memorable.

Thanks to all those members, past and present, who've supported Jackie & I through the seven Chapter weekends that we've led.

I'm signing off as a Road Captain for a while, though not leaving the Chapter I hasten to add. Looking forward to some more great rides with you all soon.

JSP aka JohnfromHull