

Lancashire and Cumbria Group April Ride – South Cumbria and the Kentmere Valley

After what has seemed a very long time, we managed to get out on a group ride in April with 7 tandems, split into 3 groups to comply with the 'Group of Six' rules. To be outside on such a beautiful day and actually talk to someone as we rode along was an absolute joy after months of isolation! Especially welcome to the group were two new couples, Tish and Jasper, and, Emily and Geoff who were joining us for the first time.

Springtime in Cumbria is a beautiful time of year and this year it is especially so, with lots of spring flowers carpeting the hedgerows and woodlands. Our groups set off from Kendal, heading south to Heversham, before circling north for a coffee stop at Levens Hall which has a history dating back to the 1200's and is home the world's oldest topiary gardens. We had refreshments in the glorious spring sunshine and chatted to Ruth, a long-time member of the group who had ridden out on her solo to catch up with us on the ride. It seemed a shame to have to move away from our position on the picnic benches outside the café, which was a bit of a suntrap.

We then climbed up to Levens village, suffering from 'Café Legs', then down through the woods into Brigsteer. Lesser Celandine, common dog violet, primroses, cowslip and Few Flowered Garlic were in abundance as we cycled on to Underbarrow, and in the woods themselves we saw the start of the bluebell flowering season. There are some quite spectacular bluebell displays around South Cumbria in the local woodlands.

As we climbed up from Underbarrow, through Crook and on to Staveley the views opened up and this Sunday was a perfectly clear days for enjoying the extensive views from the high ground above Staveley. Well worth all the effort of the climb up from Underbarrow. Then it was down into Staveley for a well-earned lunch stop.

We don't often cycle as a group along the Kent Valley and up to Kentmere, mainly because the valley is a dead end (to tandems anyway!) but it is without doubt a lovely ride and in the sunshine, with no wind, and great company too, it was an absolute 'must do'. Then it was back to Kendal via the back lane. Trying to keep groups apart, yet not lose anyone, wasn't easy, I must admit. We had riders who knew the area in each group and that, coupled with the use of gps, got us safely through.

We are all looking forward to this summer and the gradual easing of restrictions and simply doing what we love to do, and that's cycling with friends.

Stephen and Jeanette Webb