



Port William Lifeboat Station



Penmaenpool Toll Bridge near Dolgellau

Wales

Traws Eryri adventure

This year **Karen Townsin** and three friends rode through Snowdonia

WOW, WOW, WOW! Our fourth annual off-road adventure, this year taking us across Snowdonia, was probably our most challenging yet. With the words "this route is best suited to experienced riders" ringing in our ears, three friends and I (combined age 240 years) set off in mid July.

We divided the 200km trip from Machynlleth to Conwy into four days of riding, stopping at Dolgellau, Trawsfynydd and Betws-y-Coed. While the distance each day was not huge, we wanted to allow plenty of time for the climbs and the weather.

There was certainly some of the latter. We got completely soaked on day one but a well-placed launderette, literally opposite our B&B in Dolgellau, saved the day. To say that the route was stunning is an understatement. Mountains, waterfalls, rivers, lakes – it had it all.

Among the many highlights were: the Snowdonia Slate Trail with its eerily cool slate pyramids; the jaw-dropping glacial valley, Nant Ffrancon; the forest trails around Betws; and the friendly people we met, from the waitress in a pub in Mach giving us a Welsh lesson, to the other riders we leap-frogged on the way.

Yes, on some of the climbs we would have been grateful for a little battery assistance,

but the descents more than made up for the pain.

Thank you, Cycling UK, for another spectacular route. Challenging and strenuous, yes, but we did it and absolutely loved it.

Near Trawsfynydd



Scotland

Cycling: the best medicine

Despite a diagnosis of Parkinson's, **Martin Coopland** joined his friend Graham for a tour of Galloway

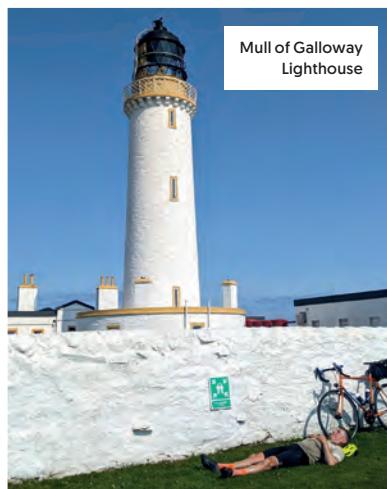
In the April/May 2020 issue of Cycle, I wrote about warm winter winds in the west of Scotland as my friend Graham and I toured to Portpatrick. I enjoyed the tour but I had a feeling not everything was right. The pedals would not turn easily and my mind found fear everywhere.

Then the world paused for Covid. It wasn't the time to be visiting my GP telling him I was worried about finding it hard to ride 100 miles. Later I abandoned a trip to the Highlands because I could not make the bicycle go. "There is something wrong with you," my companions told me.

To the surgery. Caring staff and referrals yielded the answer: I have Parkinson's disease. Cycling is a huge part of my life and it has been significantly impacted. Luckily, cycling is the top thing consultants recommend to help manage the condition.

My left leg is affected: it becomes tense and fights me. But I now know that, if I persist with my ride for 40 minutes, the tension fades. My shoulders become painfully tense, which I deal with by regularly shifting my hands and frequent stops for stretching – or 'gate yoga' as I call it.

My lack of dopamine makes me anxious, so going out to cycle, even on familiar roads, is an issue that I have to push through every



Mull of Galloway Lighthouse

time. My cycling has become difficult yet always makes me feel better. My symptoms are reduced and the effect lasts hours.

In August 2024, Graham and I repeated our trip to Portpatrick. Summertime brought greener roads but the wind was still present. Graham did the hard shifts into the wind. I rode behind, eking out my energies, a grateful passenger. We made it to the Mull of Galloway in glorious sunshine, where I took my medicine: a spoonful of cycling.