



A CLASSIC IN THE MAKING

by Nick Williamson, Kent Valley RC

An absolutely cracking event!

The early part of the ride down the Mennock Pass to Drumlanrig and up the Dalveen Pass was ridden at breakneck speed. At 55 miles, my computer gave an average speed of 18.2mph and I was being overtaken by several trains of riders. The ride up the Devil's Beef Tub climb slowed things down, and the Talla climb continued that process. I actually enjoyed Talla because, although steep, it did allow a rhythm to be established.

I thought the next section past another reservoir and alongside St Mary's Loch would be easy, but I hadn't allowed for the effects of the previous fast miles and the head wind. I found myself alone through this section, and battling a vicious headwind. I was delighted to be joined by another rider, and eventually another small group formed which eased the way over rolling roads to Moffat.

The draggy climb from Elvanfoot to Wanlockhead showed up a lot of very tired limbs, and it was with much trepidation and a specially reserved SIS super gel that I started up Lowther Hill.

I expected a steady evenly graded road to the summit. Instead, after an innocuous start, it featured some really steep ramps, at least two of which revealed themselves when I thought the summit was imminent. Arrival at the summit was a truly fulfilling moment. The views of the Southern Uplands were breathtaking (believe me there wasn't much spare breath to take!) and there was a real sense of achievement. It was very special to finish an event on a summit. The descent was over all too soon, and the day was rounded off with a piece of cake and a cappuccino in the very pleasant (Hidden Treasures lead mining) museum cafe.

I had expected a relatively easy ride bearing in mind it only promised 2000m of climbing, but arrived at the finish feeling that I had been really tested. Perhaps this was due to the summit finish, but the fast early sections and some of the headwinds

may have contributed. The scenery was wonderful, particularly the section around Talla and St Mary's Loch and the final climb. Signposting and marshalling were first rate, and the feed stations had a good choice of food. Someone even filled my bottles for me! There seemed to be a real attention to detail with regard to things like parking and general organisation.

After a good night's sleep and some time for reflection, I have come to the conclusion that the Southern Uplands Sportive must be one of the very best sportives in the UK. The arrival at the top of Lowther Hill after 105 miles has no counterpart in any other UK event, and will live in my memory for a long time. The event has all the elements needed to become a classic.

All credit to Peter and his team.