



SOUTHERN UPLANDS SPORTIVE 2008

HOW WAS IT FOR YOU?

Brilliant day out yesterday - no time for drinking/eating all the many performance enhancing foodstuffs I had brought along!

Thanks you for organising a fantastic event. I've done a few sportives and I would say this is the best. The course is interesting(!), good feed station, good cycling top, good signage and good marshalling. I like the electronic timing which is much better than the 'dibber' type.

Cracking event. Thanks for a great day's riding. I was near to death by the time of the 2nd feed station! Maybe it could be placed a little earlier? Other than that, a superbly organised event and thanks to all your many helpers for their time and encouragement.

Just a quick note to say the SUS08 was great - even though I came last. Challenging route, well organised and a good atmosphere. Well done. Your two medical folk/marshals at Elvanfoot were fantastic. I got off the bike to stretch my back and the lady informed me that she was a qualified masseuse. She started manipulating my lumbar region. The massage really sorted out my back. After that they both gave my flagging spirits a boost with encouragement. I set off towards Leadhills feeling rejuvenated with a spring in my pedal. Definitely above and beyond the call of duty.

Thanks for organising yesterday. The course was excellent and the whole day was very well run and there was a good friendly atmosphere. I really hope that the event is repeated again.

What a blinding event! I really wish I'd got myself fit enough to do the whole thing BUT the short course was really perfect, especially the two gradual down hills that helped make my average speed a bit more respectable. I couldn't fault the organisation or the atmosphere at all (even in a constructive criticism sort of way). One of the guys from Castle Douglas Cycle Centre showed me how to fix my brakes (MTBs and tourers are my thing so a caliper was a closed world to me). The climb at the end was an absolute killer - I've cycled over the Alps, the

Pyrenees, the Rockies, the Andes, Applecross and the Lecht and Lowther Hill beats the best of them for sheer pain! Will definitely try some more sportives and you can count me in for the SUS09. Out of 10? Would have to go for the full 10!

Just like to say what a great day it was yesterday. Tough going and the end was torture but completing the course was great. To have a sportive like this on your doorstep is fantastic. The feed stations were well manned and really helpful as were the marshals. Really impressed by the timing system not having to stop and dib your timer is great. I hope it was worth it for yourself because I can imagine what a lot of effort had been put in to organise such an event, I think demand will be even higher next year.

I would like to congratulate you and the entire SUS team for putting on one of the best sportives I have ever taken part in. From your initial communications, right through to the very end, the SUS was incredibly professional, and coupled with this, every member of your team - from the guys at registration, to marshals and stewards at the feed stations, to the guys on top of Lowther Hill - were unwavering in their helpfulness. Logistical arrangements were second to none, and most important, as you and I had discussed before, the route marking was spot on. This meant us riders could focus on the ride, and what a stunning choice of route you made. It was unique in its beauty, the views afforded across the Borders countryside were breathtaking. Your inclusion of Lowther Hill at the end of the ride made the sportive feel like a true mountain stage from any of the Grand Tours, and with the wind as well as the gradient picking up the closer to the top, this made for a truly epic ending to the sportive. The finish banner made the end all the more grand, as did the views from the top of Lowther Hill. For the sportive to be in its first year makes this all the more of an exceptional event, the trip from London to Scotland was certainly worthwhile (even if the pins are somewhat sore this a/m!).

Thanks for yesterday, great event.

Congratulations on yesterday's event really well organised and a great day.

Fantastic day – thanks. Had mechanicals early on and spent the next 90 miles chasing my so called "friends". To be fair it probably allowed me to savour the countryside...although having said that the stretch from St Mary's Loch to Moffat was a grind into the wind on my lonesome. The last stretch to Leadhills and including the climb of Lowther Hill was awesome and very memorable. The climb struck a vicious balance of steepness and length with 100 lumpy miles in the legs already. Organisation was top notch so a big thank you to you and all the stewards. Brilliant day!

Thanks very much for a brilliant event, and many, many thanks to all the helpers, marshals, and so on! It wasn't as warm as I'd have liked, so I left the sun-block alone and got sun burnt legs, but it was dry. Those two steep hills, at Talla and

up to the NATS station at the end, were seriously steep. I don't think I've ever climbed a hill so slowly! One disappointment, that has nothing to do with the organiser, is that so many 'new' cyclists haven't learnt how to ride in a group and share the pace. You don't need to pretend you're stretching out the bunch in the Tour de France, keeping the pace high for your leader who's sitting comfortably behind you. That may make for good TV, but it's no fun in a sportive. Next time, please be sociable, and take short turns at the front - like the professionals do most of the time!

Congratulations on a superbly organized event. I am sure I speak for all the Border City Wheelers when I say we all thoroughly enjoyed it.

I've just got back from the event, and I wanted to say thanks. A superb day - very well organised, excellent signage, a really nice route with good variety, great scenery and weather (did you arrange them?!), very helpful and friendly organisers, and a superb cheeky finish. I hope this becomes an annual event?

I completed the event yesterday and wanted to record my thanks. It was an excellent sportive; a mix of love and hate. I loved the scenery, the route (well most of it), and the cheerfulness of the helpers and hated that last few kms up the hill - god that was brutal on tired legs. I wish to draw particular praise to all your helper staff - a very happy, helpful bunch. I rolled into the halt after climbing from Moffat and was met by a chap who filled my bottle, brought me food and a drink and appeared genuinely interested in my welfare - thanks it helped. I will be back, even the final climb would not put me off a return visit and I now have a time target to beat. Having bonked on my entry to Moffat, I know I can beat my time, just drink and eat with a little more control. Once again thanks to you and your team - a great event.

An excellent event, encompassing almost all conceivable cycling conditions; super fast descents, hard climbs and tough flat sections. Lowther Hill was the jewel in the crown, an absolute b*****d going up (really, after 102 miles, that was sadistic!), but what a sense of achievement! Thanks for organising this event. Also, give my thanks to the photographers and marshals. Compared to those I've come across before, these were by far the best in terms of trying to get the best photographs and shouting lots of necessary encouragement (especially on Lowther Hill). I even received mechanical help from a first aid van! A superb cycling experience.

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.

Just a note to Pete & all the organisation team including the willing friendly volunteers at all points around the course. This ride really exceeded my expectations, a fabulous blend of testing “bumps” and recovery stretches.... And the scenery was absolutely fab... yes ok I was losing the will to live on the stretch back to Wanlockhead... and the last climb was certainly a challenge! Hopefully got under the 6 hours but not that bothered about time. Thanks to the guy who rode two up with me for a big part of the ride to get the average up (sorry didn't get your name, originally from the area now living & racing MTBs in Cambridgeshire). Nice one team, see you next year.

Just like to add my tuppence worth. One of the Great events in the UK, final climb was truly awesome. Finishing on the summit of Lowther was punishing after the previous 102 miles, but a great experience. Organisation was second to none, clearly signposted. Peter Smith and his crew deserve a big pat on the back.

Great organisation, great event, great climb at the finish, views from the top made up for all the effort getting there.

It was a great day out. Feed stations were great and the whole event was well run. I unfortunately and quite stupidly went like a bat out of hell for 60 miles in under 3 hrs. I was thinking I had just 2 weeks ago did the 140 miles sportive in Wales and therefore 105 should prove no probs. Then the cramp gods decided on the road to Moffat that I should be afflicted and then I died a thousand deaths until the next feed station against the head wind. I felt better with some food and sodium and the cramps disappeared and I started to feel well again.

Unfortunately, I snapped a spoke on my Kysrium ES back wheel 2 miles from Wanlockhead and it was so far out of true it would not turn. I walked a fair bit perhaps a mile with my bike on my shoulder until I got a lift for the last mile or so. I lost perhaps 20-30 mins but I reckon I came in about 6hrs 40mins or so. I was a bit gutted as I could see the Radar top for miles and to come so close annoyed me somewhat but I have climbed it before on my own so did not let it spoil what otherwise for me was a great day out. Thank you all who organised and helped. It's a great Sportive and it is a classic in the making.

What an excellent event. The pre-event organisation as well as the arrangements on the day were impeccable and any criticism would be minor to the point of 'nit picking'. The weather on the day was perfect for a long event; dry, some sun, some cloud and not very windy. The course was a challenge for everyone; it was easy to be fooled by the start from the top of Mennock Pass followed by the easy section alongside the delightful River Nith. Next came Dalveen Pass and the Devil's Beeftub both reminiscent of alpine passes with their long easy gradients. After the hors d'oeuvre came the main course; the climb of Talla! My reaction on first view was something like, “***** hell we're not going up there are we?” Well we did; it was steep, but fortunately not too long. The road back to Moffat was a

long climb with an irritating head wind. After Moffat, we climbed the lower bit of the 'Beeftub' (missed earlier) before an easier section to Elvanfoot. With almost 100 miles on the computer, the remainder was tough, uphill to Leadhills, more uphill to return to Wanlockhead and then for dessert the 5km climb to 725m and the radar domes on Lowther Hill. After 100 miles it was very steep and very hard. I crawled across the line at just under 7 hours on the bike having enjoyed a superb day; quiet (if bumpy) roads and some great group riding. Highly recommended, provided that the weather is nice.

Sorry Gill, not tonight!!

Great route – climb is far harder than Alpe d'Huez.

OUCH!

Great event. Had a ball!!

Great route – back next year – lighter!!

Wow, amazing, great encouragement from the photo guy. Hope I look good in the pictures!

When's it on again? Super event!!! (Need a parachute to get back down though).

You should start with a swim, add a marathon to the cycle and make it an Ironman! Great!

*#£\$ me!

Steeeeeep!!

Just fab!! Only one loop?!

Great, but Talla Wall not quite vertical!

Great final climb – reminiscent of the Ventoux but harder!

The hardest ride I've ever done - makes the Bealach na Ba look like a stroll.

Wow, that was awesome (and horrible).

Superb. Radar a beast!

Excellent! Great organisation, good food,. Thanks to NATS and Pete.

I did not think that I could breathe that hard – good fun now. Great course. I love the final hill...now that I've done it!

Excellent. Still shaking with the effort!

Make it longer next time! Brilliant!

Mutts Nuts. Back 2009.

Worse than Mont Ventoux!

Fantastic route, killer climb!

Thanks for a great day – Edinburgh Lads.

Does the 1KM sign mean 1 (vertical) KM? Awesome, thanks!

Peter Smith is Satan.

This is a potential 'classic'. Very enjoyable!

Hill – what hill?? Am I glad to be here. Excellent route! Baz, I made it – C

So did I – Baz.

The view at the end is worth it (almost).

Scottish breakfast – not recommended! Lovely! (I feel sick).

A climber's dream! Cheers!

Excellent – very difficult finish – marshals fantastic – thank you.

Great event – superb course and organisation.

AAAAAARGH MY LEGS!

Second that.

In addition to the plaudits on the cycloport blog, just wanted to say that the ride on Sunday was fantastic - a great mix of testing climbs, long undulating sections and of course, the sting in the tail of Lowther Hill - far worse than I'd anticipated, but I made it (just!). Having done 8 different sportives over the last year and a bit, the SUS was exemplary in its organisation and immense thanks must go to you, the team of volunteers and the people of Wanlockhead and surrounds. Marshalling was great, signage couldn't be faulted, parking was well managed, feed stations were a godsend and the general high level of enthusiasm and support from all involved kept you going and made this a truly memorable event. Coupled with great scenery and perfect weather what more could you ask! Many thanks to yourself and to the whole team involved - can't wait for next year's now!

Just like to echo all the positive comments on sportive. Fantastic event! Well organised and great location. Bring on next year!

Thanks for such a well organised and enjoyable event. I won't forget Lowther Hill for a while! Back next year a few pounds lighter.

It was a really well run event and a spectacularly good route. Unfortunately, I was really struggling when I got back to Wanlockhead (serious case of tendinitis in the knee meant I was struggling to turn the pedals at all) and I decided that Lowther Hill was a hill too far for me and my bike (a Dawes tourer!) - hence the lack of finish time. Unusually for me, not being able to complete the course properly was not too much of a downer, which shows how much I must have enjoyed the rest of the day. The final ascent clearly made a lasting impression on the other riders, and hopefully I'll be in a better position to manage it next year.

I would just like to thank you and your team for a wonderful day on Sunday. Everything was so well organised, it was a pleasure to be a part of it. Please thank all the marshals and volunteers who were all so friendly and helpful. This is a beautiful part of the world and is fully deserving of such a classic sportive. I wish you luck with expanding the event next year. I just can't wait for next year and I will make sure I'm fit enough to do the whole event.

Thanks for organising a fantastic event on Sunday. I only completed the Baby Radar...the first 37 were fantastic and the last 3 a great challenge. I am looking forward to completing it again next year.

Can I thank you for an amazing day. This was made even more so by the positive spirit of each and every volunteer. Whoever it was who gave me water and a ham roll at the penultimate feed station probably got me through it, I never thanked people enough on the day, as I couldn't really speak, but please pass on my thanks. The organisation was fantastic as was the scenery. I hope there is another one next year.

Just another email to congratulate you on the event - very well organised and a real challenge. I swore at the top I wouldn't do it again, and now I want to give it another go! My only comment is whether it's possible to enlarge the field, as for us lesser mortals towards the rear, there was little opportunity to team up with other riders.

Thank you for the great event. Your organisation and support was excellent. I concur with others in saying it was the best I've taken part in and that includes Leg Breaker, White Rose Classic, Etape Du Dales, Pendle Pedal. I'd like to come back next year and crack 6-hours. Hopefully I won't have the same problem that cost me 20 minutes. Worked with 3 great bunches of lads round the course, it certainly helps when you are all working together as a team. It made the day for me.

Thank you so much for a fabulous day on Sunday. Exceptionally well organized with friendly and helpful marshals. A very big thank you to the gentleman from Huddersfield who was driving the course as his son was cycling the event. He very kindly came to my rescue and did wonders with his screwdriver on my derailleur after my chain had come off for the umpteenth time! Also to Keith from Aberdeen who encouraged me on that long drag from St Mary's Loch back to Moffat into the head wind - thank you for your back wheel. A great day, excellent weather and a tough course, that final sting in the tail was amazing. Well done and I look forward to next year.

A great event, very well organised. Just like to add my thanks to you and the volunteers and marshals, all extremely friendly and helpful. A brilliant route - deserves to become a classic. And savoury food at the feed stations - what a treat. I've spread the word among my club mates so you should see more of us next year.

Thanks a lot for organising such a good event. I rode the Maratona dles Dolomites, which had 4000m climbing, 2 weeks ago and thought I was climbing well but that last climb/cliff put me in my place (I threw up on the finish line!!!). I've been trying to think of something that would make the event better but the course, organisation and Wanlockhead (as a start/finish) were all really really good. The only thing I can think of is a bigger field, I've only done 2 sportives, the Maratona (11000 riders) and the North Cumberland Challenge (800 riders) so I don't know what the normal is. I don't know if the entries were lower because it is the first time of running or you have a maximum limit but more riders would be better. I will be back next year as I have a score to settle with that Lowther Hill and thanks again for the excellent day.

Thanks for a great event. Even though I was nearly last looking back it was a great day. The Grey Mares tail was absolute hell continually up and down into that headwind. When I finally got to the bottom of Lowther hill I felt I couldn't go any further but with encouragement and water from the stewards I set off. Reaching the top was awesome and I didn't feel nearly as bad as I did at the bottom from the sense of achievement. A big thanks to all the support team, doing small things like putting energy powders in the water bottles for you makes such a difference when you are absolutely knackered. I'm sure once word gets around you will be pushed to increase numbers for next year.

My first sportive. Used to ride Audax years ago though. Thought you did a great job organising it. Feed staff and marshals were very friendly. As were the photo guys... "go on mate!" Thanks a lot and I look forward to next year!

This was my first sportive, I hadn't trained enough and didn't finish but was very impressed by the organisation. I grew up in this area and was again reminded of Scotland's hidden beauty spot - you don't need to drive to the

highlands to see some spectacular scenery. One suggestion is that you could have marshalls posted somewhere between Tweedsmuir and Moffat - at least when I came through I didn't see anyone and it is a long stretch to be unsupported. Thanks to all.

It would be remiss of me not to say a big thank you for Sunday. Although I wouldn't have said so on the day with 20 to go, it really was a chuffing good day out. I must also mention all the support staff who were helpful and enthusiastic, the latter spurring me on to the finish..Thank you once again.

Just a short note to thank you and the team for a magnificent event. I know these things take a lot of time and effort to organise and I have to say that it was by far the most professional event I have taken part in. The course itself was superb, a good mix of climbs and undulating roads and the finish climb will live long in the memory, I'm no mountain goat so to get up it in a reasonable time is definitely the highlight of my season. Thanks again to you and the team and I look forward to seeing you again next year.

Congratulations for organising such a fantastic event, what a day! (Pain is temporary but the memories last for ever).

Really enjoyed the Sportive, never done one before or cycled so far and found it tough! Great cycling on such quiet roads with superb scenery, well done with the excellent organization.

Many thanks to all for a memorable day. There is one suggestion I'd like to make: for me the finish seemed a bit of an anti-climax. The riders finished and then dispersed to the various car parks, packed up and left. I would have enjoyed meeting some of the riders I spent some time during the day over a cup of tea and cakes in Wanlockhead. I'd love to do it again in '09, but I know that the conditions are very unlikely to be as glorious again. It would be a very different event in driving rain. You and your team did a fantastic job.

Thanks for putting together a great day out. I really enjoyed the challenge and I will be back again for more next year.

Thank you to you and all your team for putting this event on and marshalling the event. While I might do such a ride with a couple of friends there was an added incentive doing it as a challenge with others.

Well done, great event. My memories are hitting a brick wall at Talla and wanting to die half-way up Lowther. Roll on 2009. Thanks again.

You're a very bad man, to find a finish like that was nasty, but not to really mention the Wall of Talla in the pre-event info was really naughty!! Thank you for a great day, brilliant route, ace road conditions & weather, marshals & helpers

great, awesome finish, great position of feed stations. Please thank NATS, Duke of Buccleuch, residents of Wanlockhead...for allowing this great event to take place. Hopefully they'll be looking forward to welcome us back in 2009 to beat our times up that fecking climb of Lowther Hill. I think u deserve a wee break after all the planning & organisation for this year's event, but I'll be back next year trying to better my time, & you'll still be a very bad man. Thanks for a day to remember.

I'm glad you let me ride it. It's one of the best events I've ever ridden. Can't wait until next year.

Brilliant - the weather the scenery, the food and that hill! Lowther was a killer but what about the Wall of Talla - 20%!!!! Value for money - £25 with perfect signing, a perfect route and three great feed stations - Etape Caledonia had closed roads, but what else? SUS is best sportif in Scotland.

I've just returned home after spending the week up in Perthshire after completing the SUS08 & wanted to drop you a line & offer my thanks for a very well organised event. The whole event was very well organised, the registration at the pub, the marshals, the signage was excellent, feed stops were very well stocked, though if I'd known that there was only water available I'd have brought some sachet's of SIS powder to add to my bottles but that's only a minor quibble & I don't want to detract from what was an excellent event.

That was a great event. Thanks to Peter and the whole team for putting on such a well organised event. And thanks also is due to NATS who in the present 'climate' could so easily have said 'no way', and also to the other groups. A great day out. I started in the second group and after passing a couple of people and being passed by a few others I didn't see anyone else for about an hour and a half and was kicking along on a 20mph+ average. I was beginning to think something awful had happened behind me. But then others appeared behind/around me after the M74, and after Talla my earlier enthusiasm was 'rewarded' and the headwind on the road to Moffat took its toll. After struggling for about 2/3rds of the road to Moffat I latched on to the rear of a group and was 'saved' (I usually like to take a turn but was too tired - sorry). The climb up Lowther was something special. On the day I was getting very concerned about how steep the top sections were becoming, a 39x27 gear wasn't enough for me, but I'm already looking back with good feelings and thinking about next year.

A lovely ride - well within limits till we hit the end of the reservoir - then up, up, up. The problem was we could see the road from some way off. It was a tantalising teaser for the main event, the climb to the summit of Lowther Hill. That was hard. It was a superb event, extremely well organised and supported. This event has to be sustained as an annual event. Indeed, I think it would work better with more entrants as the groups took some time to form and I cycled for a significant part

of the route on my own. I was pleased with 6 hr 37 min, but will plan to beat 6 hrs next year.

Another thumbs up for a great event. Did the Vaujany and Marmotte sportives on the previous 2 weekends so made 3rd in a row with a mountain finish. Would be good to have others on the UK calendar with similar. PS was anyone here the rider who, with impeccable timing, managed to throw up at the exact instant he was crossing the finish line and getting his photo taken??

Well done to all. Well what a day me and Stevie had, absolutely mental start and under 2 hours to the first feed which seemed crazy fast due to our group containing a certain Mr McGarrity from Dooleys. We stopped briefly and recharged with a few ham rolls and bananas filled the water bottles and off we went this time on our own working in a chain to keep the momentum going. When we hit the side of Talla reservoir we knew we had blown it as our speed at the start had been too high and now we were going to suffer on the climb. Thankfully it was short and sharp but sore all the same managed to churn up without getting out of the seat. We headed down the other side towards the road back to Moffat which seemed to drag on for ever and the head wind was now making us suffer for our earlier heroics. We arrived at the feed station feeling a little tired and weary not knowing what lay ahead, thank god for that !!! We spent too long getting our act together and ended up quite cold and stiff now, everything was hurting. We left the feed station alone and slogged our way back to the bottom of the radar climb. We stopped again just outside Leadhills for a stretch and 2 gels each in prep for the big boy. Once we reached it I took it steady and never got into my threshold so managed quite well and only got out the saddle once. Stevie was feeling it big time and nearly gave up but I encouraged him all the way and he crossed the line then fell on his back and died. I was running 34x26 and Stevie 34x27 so thank goodness for compact chainsets. We had a total time of 6hrs 48 mins and stopped for a total of 28mins so considering it was our first ever 100+ we managed quite well but next time we will not get sucked into the flying start. A lesson well learned!!! All in all a fantastic event, well organised and we met a great bunch of people on the day.

Another big nod of appreciation for the organisers of this event. On paper, I don't think it looks too difficult, but both times I rode the course (a recce and the event itself) I've been pretty shattered afterwards! At the start I deliberately went off the front of group 11 to make sure I had the descent to myself. A number of riders followed, and we got into a good group. This included Catriona Morrison (<http://www.catmorrison.com/>) and her husband, and we worked well together (what she describes on her website as a "steady pace"!) until the first feed stop. Just as we reached the first feed stop a really fast group caught us and they all carried on as I stopped to get water. A few minutes later, I set off again with two others to catch the group again - no chance! I tried my best, and didn't make a dent in the gap. I soon got collected by two other blokes which grew to five or six, and we stayed together until it all broke up again at Talla (me going backwards

with three of the six). This particular mob stayed together and grew a bit on the way to Moffat, fracturing a bit on the way up to the second feed station, with me going forwards for once. Beyond the feed station, me and two other blokes stuck together and rode all the way to Wanlockhead. The nearer we got to the hill the less was said, as we were all bricking the thought of Lowther with 103 miles already under the belt! Anyway, I got dropped on the climb and slogged my way up on my granny gear (unashamedly 30x27) and even that was difficult! Don't know my exact time, but somewhere just under 6hrs, which I'm quite pleased with given my limited training this year. Would definitely recommend this event to those considering an event in Scotland.

The weather was perfect, the event route was beautiful and all the volunteers and staff were super friendly. This was my first sportif and based on the experience, I'd be up for another.

I've never been on a sportive which started with as fast a pace as this one. The contrast couldn't have been starker with the pale shadows of men (and women) who were fighting every inch of the road at the finish. It was the most memorable sportive of the year for me.