

My Favourite Place to Cycle.

Twice a week I share a journey with a friend who works in Greenock, me on my recumbent, Chris on his hybrid: we meet in Paisley at 06.30hrs and cycle west on National Route 75 where we stop at Barrainney, just outside Port Glasgow. We exchange pleasantries, he gives me a jelly baby, then he continues west and I head home through a little bit of heaven.

I leave the cycletrack at the bridge over Auchentiber Road and escape into beautiful rolling countryside, with a single-track road ahead of me that disappears and emerges through a patchwork quilt of fields and woods. All around is silence, save for sheep, the squeak of a buzzard and my tyres on the road. Some prolonged, but gentle climbing gets me to a vantage point where it's so clear I can see the peak of Goatfell on Arran, then Beinn Lomond and the Campsies to my right. I might see a deer skirting the edge of a wood, there are rabbits everywhere and the road continues to climb.

Earphones in, maybe a podcast, maybe music, sometimes just silence and the joy of being in the moment until I get to the top of the climb by Auchenfoyle Farm and start back east. My descent is a slalom of long bends, speed picking up all the time, past farms and fields, through green tunnels of trees. Zipping through surface water cascading down the embankment from fields and the overwhelming aroma of silage and animal muck, which strangely I like. Slowing down for the dairy herd at Margarets Mill Farm and avoiding fresh cowpats, I get a last burst of speed past the chicane at Mountblow, careful to avoid an emerging tractor.

I'm laughing out loud now as I cross the Gryfe Water into Kilmacolm and double back onto the cycletrack. 200m of stroboscopic early sunlight through the trees and it's a gentle incline all the way due to Paisley. My 'phone goes and it's Armand.

"Where are you?" He says in his cockney twang.

"Between Kilmacolm and Bridge of Weir. You?"

"Hammersmith – just going into the tunnel." He swears at me and hangs up because he knows I'll get home, showered and into work before he does.

I'm on the train with my Brompton, look around me and wonder who else has been to their favourite place this morning. Life really is this good.