

The Adventure Syndicate and their 500-mile cycle to find out “What would Mary do?”

The diaries of 17-year-old Mary Harvie’s 500-mile cycle and hostelling holiday in 1936 were the inspiration for a new cycle adventure film shown for the first time on Saturday at the Fort William Mountain Festival on Biking Night.

‘What would Mary do?’ an off-road biking and adventure tourism film from Hostelling Scotland and The Adventure Syndicate involved well known Edinburgh-based cyclists and adventurers.

The Adventure Syndicate made up of former mountain bike racer, Lee Craigie with Philippa Battye and Alice Lemkes, undertook the challenge of retracing the route followed by Mary Harvie in the first half of the 20th century. Lee and Alice were often seen on the city streets during lockdown cycling their cargo bikes on food deliveries. This led to the birth of the

Cargo Bike Movement which is now based at Tollcross and who are holding an open day at St Margaret's Park in Corstorphine on 6 March 2022.

'What would Mary do?', a cycling film that captures Scotland's majestic and remote landscapes, environment and natural heritage together with the true spirit of hostelling, was created by [Maciek Tomiczek](#). It follows The Adventure Syndicate, a group of female adventurers and storytellers as they mental and physical wellbeing through their outdoor endeavours, taking on a five-day, 300-mile, cycling and hostel-packing journey, from Glasgow to the Highlands and Skye.



The Adventure Syndicate, a group of female adventurers and storytellers who promote mental and physical wellbeing through their outdoor endeavours, to recreate an epic 500-mile cycle and youth hostelling adventure from the 1930's.

The original two-week, two wheeled holiday was carried out by 17-year-old hosteller Mary Harvie, from Shotts in Lanarkshire, with her two older sisters, Ella and Jean, in 1936. This epic journey, that began in Glasgow and saw the women explore the

North West Highlands, Skye, Highland Perthshire, and Stirlingshire, was documented in Mary's diary.

On Thursday 14 October 2021 Lee Craigie (red top), Alice Lemkes (purple helmet), and Phillipa Battye (silver helmet) from The Adventure Syndicate set out from Glasgow Youth Hostel on their own seven-day, 500-mile, on and off-road cycle adventure, an appreciation of the Harvie sisters' incredible cycling trip. In order to avoid some busy traffic on their planned [but not set in stone] route, they will head off road making use of old drove roads and forgotten singletrack, while also facing sections of mountainous 'hike a bike' and bog trotting.

PHOTO © Wattie Cheung

The film, commissioned by Hostelling Scotland as part of their 90th anniversary celebrations which also supports [Scotland's Year of Stories 2022](#), was inspired by the poignant and insightful diaries written by 17-year-old Mary Harvie, from Shotts in Lanarkshire, in the summer of 1936. These were published in Hostelling Scotland's Members Handbook, after her son Harvie Paterson transcribed them during lockdown.

The diary recounts Mary's two-week 500-mile cycle and hostelling holiday which she took with her two sisters Ella and Jean, exploring the North West Highlands, Skye, Highland Perthshire, and Stirlingshire, both on and off the bike. Her journal encapsulates the true spirit of active adventure and sustainable tourism that, to this day, comes from exploring Scotland on a bike, while accessing affordable, flexible and welcoming hostel accommodation.

Lee Craigie from The Adventure Syndicate, who is also Scotland's Active Nation Commissioner, said: "Our respect and admiration for Mary Harvie's spirit grew and grew the more we thought about the trip she made with her sisters in 1936. In her diaries Mary comes across as someone totally up for a challenge, really curious, full of energy and above all, humble and understated about the things she did.

"Mary's willingness to stay in each moment and make the very

best of every situation became our guiding mantra. If we were cold, lacking enthusiasm or looking for the easy way out we asked ourselves, 'What would Mary do?'. She developed superhuman attributes by the end of our trip."



The Adventure Syndicate's reimagined and ambitious route had to embrace and commemorate the Harvie sisters' original route. However, to avoid the busy traffic they were keen to explore the off-road alternatives, while taking into account winter light and weather conditions, as well as the locations of today's Youth Hostel network. It made use of old drove roads and forgotten singletrack, while also encompassing sections of gruelling mountainous "hike a bike" and bog trotting. Wild swimming, hitching rides on a Model T Ford, a ferry and a bus, and brewing coffee in the most incredibly scenic spots were all features of the trip. They also made the most of the time and space at the seven Youth Hostels they stayed at to stretch, enjoy each other's company, read,

sketch, play cards, cook for each other, and even some singing.

Margo Paterson, CEO of Hostelling Scotland, said: “The great thing about hostelling is the sense of community and the unique relationships our members and guests have with our hostel teams. This adventure was born from a chance conversation between Mary’s son Harvie Paterson and Karl and Lorna who manage our Port Charlotte Youth Hostel on Islay. Harvie told them that he had transcribed his mother’s diaries during lockdown and wondered if we would be interested in adding them to our archives, but Mary’s story was far too exciting to be hidden away.

“We were delighted that Lee, Philippa and Alice shared our vision and at a time when sustainable, active travel has never been more relevant, they have created a fantastic story of their own. This has been brilliantly captured on film by Maciek Tomiczek who has managed to tell a fantastic adventure story showcasing the outstanding beauty of Scotland (no matter what the weather!).”

In recognition of VisitScotland’s Year of Stories, The Adventure Syndicate documented their expedition through daily social media posts, mobile phone photography, and a travel journal, together with their 18-minute film, their own 20th century diary.



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