

NEWFORCE

Spring 2015 Issue 139





This page: Not what you'd expect to see on a winter's ride to the coast!
Cover photo: Bruce at Bike Park Wales



Editorial

Welcome to the spring 2016 edition of Newforce. The feedback from the calendar I produced for the last issue has been overwhelmingly good so I'm sure there'll be another for 2017. Most of you will probably know by now that there was an unfortunate mix up with the mail out and they were flagged as having insufficient postage. I can only apologise on behalf of 'the magazine team'. If you didn't pay the excess postage to get yours at the time there may still be a few left. Ask Allan our membership secretary, if you would like one.

Winter is now drawing to a close and at the time of writing we have yet to see any snow down this end of the country. So once again a disappointing winter for the fatbike owners. In fact we haven't had any significant snow here since the big rush to buy fatbikes two or three years ago. The most wintry picture I could find for this issue was the frosty morning a Goatee Beach that I've put on the back cover. Maybe we'll have some snow next winter?

Do you ride alone? I know there are some in the club who regard cycling as a mainly social activity and would only very rarely go out riding on their own and there are others who thoroughly enjoy heading off solo for a variety of reasons. Maybe exercise, maybe mental relaxation or perhaps to be free from the constraints of a group ride to explore some of the turnings and offshoots they've never been down before. For me it's partly that I work Saturdays, leaving Sunday as the only weekend day to spend with my family and also that ever since I was old enough to do so I have always enjoyed getting on my bike and going off to see what's out there. Being on holiday or working away and having the time to explore somewhere completely new is particularly motivating, with every turn or every hilltop revealing somewhere you've never seen before. But sometimes even the area you are most familiar with can throw up something completely unexpected. Maybe it's getting closer than usual to the wildlife you see or as in the pictures opposite, crossing paths with something you really couldn't guess would be out at the same time. On that occasion I'd had just a couple of hours spare on my Tuesday off and as the sun was out my natural instinct was to head towards the coast, in this case Pylewell Point near Lymington. Other notable surprises whilst out on my own have been seeing a BMW photoshoot down at Calshot for the then new 3 series, having a conversation with a Frenchman in a hire car in French, whilst riding alongside him in rural Japan, meeting a very nice young lady (also cycling) on the road into Minehead who then joined me for a drink when we reached the town. I'll add that the last one happened many many years ago, long before I met my dear wife, just in case she reads this.

Whenever, wherever you ride, and whoever you ride with keep your eyes and ears open to what's out there and now spring's arriving, enjoy the warmer and hopefully drier weather.

Your Committee

Committee meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every third month at the New Forest Inn at Emery Down. All club members are welcome to attend and raise any points or questions.

Chairman	Roger Shephard roger.shephard@newforce.org.uk 02380 392696	
Secretary	Sue Marsland susanm@newforce.org.uk	
Membership Secretary	Allan Knight allank@neforce.org.uk	
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Access Officer	Barry Collier 01425 475678	
Newsletter Editor	Keith Whitten keith@perfectbalancecycles.co.uk	
Website Editor	James Davenport james_davenport@hotmail.com	
Other Committee Members	Robin Knight Ian Taylor John Hawkins Linda Hawkins Eleanor Rutter Dean Johnson Clive French	Steve Keith Ashley Denham Malcolm (Max) Streeton Stu Rogers Karen Clark Nick Clark

Club Policy & Ride Aims

As a club we want to encourage people to share our passion for mountain biking.

We welcome new members to participate and contribute to the club.

We organise regular rides, fortnightly on Sundays and weekly on weekday evenings.

We organise multi day trips to other areas to experience some of the best riding this country has to offer.

Full conditions of membership and how to join are published on the club website under the 'The Club' tab.

Membership Fees

Individual	1 year £15.00	2 years £27.50	5 years £65.00
Family	1 year £22.50	2 years £40.00	5 years £90.00

Riding With Us

Anyone who is competent on a bike is welcome to ride with us although we would politely request that you become a member if you ride with us more than twice.

Cycle helmets are compulsory on all club rides.

Please dress appropriately for the likely weather conditions.

You are advised to bring a drink, particularly on warm days

Ensure you are equipped to deal with punctures, preferably by carrying a spare inner tube or two. Mud and patches aren't a great combination.

Check that your bike is in good working order before the start of a ride eg no cracks in the frame, splits in the tyres, worn out brakes etc.

Finally, please carry emergency contact details — just in case something a little unplanned happens.

Our Organised Sunday Rides

Planned Sunday ride venues are published on the club website and in the newsletter. They generally follow the pattern of two in the New Forest area and one outside, anywhere within an hour's drive from Southampton. A short description of the likely route will be included along with the designated pub or cafe for post ride socialising.

Rides will aim to leave at 10am unless otherwise stated. Most are planned to finish by 1pm but a few will be designated 'all day rides' with a stop for refreshments part way round.

The ride locations are set at committee meetings and if you know anywhere good to ride in the local area that you think we have neglected please tell us.

To aid finding the start location we recommend using **www.streetmap.co.uk** along with the grid reference supplied.

The Sunday rides usually attract enough riders to split into two or three groups dependent on ability and enthusiasm.

The Club Newsletter

The club newsletter is published quarterly, usually a few weeks after each committee meeting. All contributions written or photographic are very welcome, indeed essential for it to keep going. If any ride has stood out for you in terms of enjoyment, triumph over adversity or something unexpected that has happened, please write a little about it and send it to the editor. If you participate in any other sports or hobbies please tell us all about them via the newsletter. In short, anything that might be a topic of conversation in the pub or café is worth putting into print and telling the rest of the club. The club is as much about socialising with like-minded people as it is about riding bikes so the newsletter content is most certainly not restricted to just biking stories.

The Evening Ride Groups

The evening rides are generally smaller, typically 4 to 10 persons and at some point long, long ago we adopted the 'curry scale' to grade the various groups:

Vindaloo.

A fast paced, strenuous Thursday night ride with no avoiding the more challenging terrain and obstacles, usually with a fairly lengthy pub stop and a late return.

Madras.

This name has been recently revived by a group basing themselves to the north of the New Forest and typically riding on occasional Wednesday evenings for 2 to 3 hours at an enthusiastic pace. Details can be found on the bulletin board.

Jalfrezi.

This group rides on Thursdays from various locations in the southern and mid Hampshire area usually with a brief mid-ride stop for cake consumption and a social in the pub afterwards. Pub stops mid-ride have been banned from this group by decree. Ride lengths are from 2 to 4 hours dependent on weather, ground conditions and how lost they get. Start locations are usually published on the bulletin board on the Monday before.

Tikka Masala

A shorter, tamer version of the Jalfrezi. See the bulletin board for the start location each week.

Korma.

Usually Tuesday nights. A shorter steadier ride with more emphasis on enjoying the scenery and company than breaking records or shredding the gnarr. Start locations will be posted on the bulletin board.

Spring/Summer Rides List

**Sunday 03 April 2016 QE Park on the A3 north of Horndean
(ref SU 719 184)**

This is a ride with an option to do a regular ½ day or an extended ride without making it a full-blown whole day expedition

Designated pub: The QE Park café for coffee and cake

There are several interesting tracks beyond the obvious choice of the official designated blue, red and wall-of-death offerings in the Park itself. Moving outside of the park boundaries will lead us onto large chunks of the South Downs Way. In one direction there is direct access to Butser Hill and the East Meon/Privett neck of the woods, whilst in the other, the SDW takes you out towards Harting Downs and Beacon Hill.

The start point is the visitor centre car park, so don't forget to bring some money for the parking meter.

This ride is not recommended for newcomers unless they are confident on steep ascents and descents and the full day option will bring its own challenges in terms of distance. For our regular attendees, the tracks are reasonably good although there are some chalk ascents and descents that will get slippery if they get wet at this time of year.

Sunday 17 April 2016 Fritham (ref SU 230 140)

Designated pub: The Royal Oak

From here you can ride along the RUPP leading northwards from Eyeworth Pond and from there, onto the track that leads towards Hale before turning back towards Fordingbridge and picking up on Hampton Ridge to get back to Fritham. Other options from this starting point are eastwards through Kings Garn Gutter and circle down through Minstead and Bolderwood for a ride with some ups and downs. Alternatively, Hampton Ridge itself can take you through to Hasley Inclosure and thence to the Red Shoot Inn and Milkham Inclosure before riding back through Slufters and back across Stoney Cross to Minstead.

**Sunday 01 May 2016 Garnier Road Park and Ride, Winchester
(ref SU 487 281)**

Designated post-ride pub: The Queen Inn, Kingsgate Road.

We usually ride from here in a winter period so it will be a pleasant change for those of us coming from outside the Winchester area to sample the delights of the area in better conditions than sub-zero temperatures. There are a number of options from this starting point but it is possible to ride southwards along the Itchen Navigation where it passes St Catherine's Hill before turning eastwards up Plague Pits Valley, then onwards along the Dongas tracks for Hazeley Down, Morestead, and Cheesefoot Head and the South Downs Way, Milbury's Inn and the general area near Cheriton. Or, if our local guides choose to take us in the other direction, it will be Compton Down, the fringes of Flowerdown, West Wood Farley and other points of note.

Whichever route we end up taking, the Queen Inn offers a warm welcome on our return.

Sunday 15 May 2016 Corfe Castle, Purbecks (all day ride) (ref SY 955 827)

Designated pub: Lunch stop during the day-ride

We will meet at the Norden Park and Ride (£2.00 all day – unless inflation has taken its toll) just off the roundabout approximately ¼ mile before the castle car park at the National Trust centre at the base of the castle mound just before Corfe village itself. From here we will ride around the Purbecks region, stopping for lunch at a convenient watering hole, taking in the sights and generally making a day of it without trying to achieve any distance records, the emphasis being on having a fun day out with friends.

Sunday 29 May 2016 Longslade Bottom (ref SU 269 002)

Designated pub: One of the Brockenhurst watering holes TBA

This location is right by the old railway line that runs from Brockenhurst to Burley so the opportunities are quite varied. Setthorns Inclosure, Wilverley, Brownhill and Holmsley in one direction and North Weirs, Ober Lodge, Rhinefield and so on in the other direction or perhaps a bit of Bashley and Ossemsley.

Sunday 12 June 2016 Farley Mount, Westwood (ref SU 420 292)

Designated pub: The Dolphin, Hursley

Sometimes we meet at Crab Wood picnic area and sometimes we meet at the Monument car park. This venue is halfway between Crab Wood and the Monument at the junction with the road coming from Hursley and Standon on the A3090.

There are some terrific tracks in this area. Parnholt Wood has a great downhill run which leads to Kings Somborne. From here it is possible to take the Test

Way up to Stockbridge and circle out round Crawley almost reaching Wherwell not far from Andover before heading back via Sparsholt and West Wood. For anyone looking for a shorter trip, you could do worse than ride around the many trails in West Wood itself perhaps linking up with some sections of the Clarendon Way.

Sunday 26 June 2016 Puttenham Common, Shackleford - Day Ride (ref SU 999 463)

Designated pub: Lunch stop during the day-ride

The first time we rode from here, we had a good trip around the area between Frensham Common / Frensham Ponds and the Devils Punch Bowl at Hindhead. There are many good tracks in the shadow of the Hog's Back and around the Rushmoor area, so any route will be worth turning up for and a good ride is assured.

Sunday 10 July 2016 BBQ – details to be announced (ref SU xxx xxx)

Designated venue: TBA

We had such a good reception last year at the Ship Inn in Owslebury at the top of White's Hill that we had high hopes for a return visit this year but we have received news that it has gone upmarket as a posh-nosh pub and will not welcome a bunch of soggy, smelly off roaders, so Linda Hawkins has kindly volunteered to put together an alternative. However, details have not been confirmed in time for newsletter deadline, so the advice is to keep an eye on the website and particularly the forum for updates as they become available.

Sunday 24 July 2016 Moyles Court (ref SU 164 083)

Designated pub: The Alice Lisle

This is a popular location situated at the Moyles Court sand pit. From here most of the available routes start with a short sharp rise but once that is out of the way, there are options for rolling on across Rockford Common (firm going) towards Linwood, the Red Shoot and Milkham, or taking a course over Ibsley Common (soft, gritty sand and a little bit of a slog) towards Abbot's Well and Hampton Ridge. We might even make a foray westwards across the River Avon and have a thrash around Ringwood Forest, Boveridge Heath, Ashley Heath and Horton Common, all well worth a visit.

Sunday 07 August 2016 Wilton near Salisbury; South Street car park - Day Ride (ref SU 094 308)

Designated pub: Lunch stop during the day-ride

The start point is the car park next to the Michael Herbert Hall, South Street, Wilton, SP2 0JS

The plan is to head up Grovely Hill to the roman road that runs through the

woods at the top. The roman road continues for approximately 4 miles and has a number of offshoots that can be explored. Half day riders could drop down to Teffont Magna or Dinton whilst those wanting a longer ride will be required to cross the A303 (with care) at Chilmark Down. From there, there is some good woodland singletrack that leads through to the continuation of the roman road which can then be re-joined. There are several routes north out of these woods that offer great views from the ridge before dropping down to Upton Lovell in the Wylve Valley where the Prince Leopold pub, set on the riverbank would make a good refreshment stop. The return would be similar to the route out but with a few deviations, notably taking a route to the south of Grovely woods that on some maps is marked as the Monarch's Way. For those reluctant to go straight home after the ride, Cobbs tearooms in the Wilton shopping village and the Greyhound pub are both within five minutes' walk of the car park.

Sunday 21 August 2016 Abbots Well (ref SU 177 129)

Designated pub: the Foresters Arms is 1/4 mile along the road from the car park.

Abbots Well is nicely situated on the western end of the Hampton Ridge path leading to Fritham and the north edge of Stoney Cross. At Fritham it is possible to double back through Sloden Inclosure and via Splash Bridge pick up on Linwood and Ibsley Common before circling northwards to return .

The other start option is to head north through Blissford and Godshill to take in some of the stickier tracks on offer in the Godshill Inclosure near Woodgreen and onwards to Hale, then perhaps a return through Hamptworth to Bramshaw Telegraph. From here it would be a route through Eyeworth Pond, Fritham and Hampton Ridge to get back to Abbots Well.

Sunday 04 September 2016 Selbourne 1/2 day (ref SU 742 335)

Designated pub: The Selborne Arms

In the middle of the village, on the left when approaching from the south, there is a pub called the Selborne Arms on the main road (B3066), and behind the pub is a public car park. We rode from here in May 2008 and again in May 2009 and it was quite pleasant. However, when we visited again in November 2010 it was cold and wet and very muddy, so here we are again to try the tracks with the hope that they will not be slippery with slurry mud and hopefully the tough climbs around the chalk hangers of this geological curiosity will be achievable. No doubt we shall make use of the pub again after the ride and may get to sit outside instead of huddling around the log fire.

Good Friday Ride

By Sue Marsland



After all the changes to and doom and gloom weather forecasts for Good Friday it was a pleasant surprise to wake up to bright sunshine, and the traffic on the M3 showed that half the country had decided to make the most of the it. Several people got held up in the traffic and arrived a bit late at the car park.

By 11.15am, 10 of us were ready to ride off and set off east along the South Downs Way enjoying the views across Hampshire to the Isle of Wight until Wheely Down where we turned left and the long grassy down hill to the Meon Valley. After a couple of miles on the old railway cycle track we arrived at the Buck Head Inn, Meonstoke and had a really good lunch sat in the sunshine in the garden by the river Meon.

After lunch the going got a lot tougher as we headed up Old Winchester Hill and as usual the sticky mud on the track up clogged up our tyres but everyone managed to cycle the whole way up until the really steep section up to the top of the hill. Again the views were amazing, so clear and everything looked so fresh.

We then looped round towards Cheriton and hoped, in vain, that the Flowerpots would be open for a much needed refreshment stop. As it was closed all we could do was fill up our water bottles ready for the climb up onto the South Downs Way and back to the cars. Most of the tracks were surprisingly dry and we did not encounter too much mud or standing water. The views across the Hampshire countryside were as good as I have ever seen them and the company was not bad either. We cycled just under 50km with 700m of up. A Grand Day Out.

Dirt – The Video

By Keith Whitten

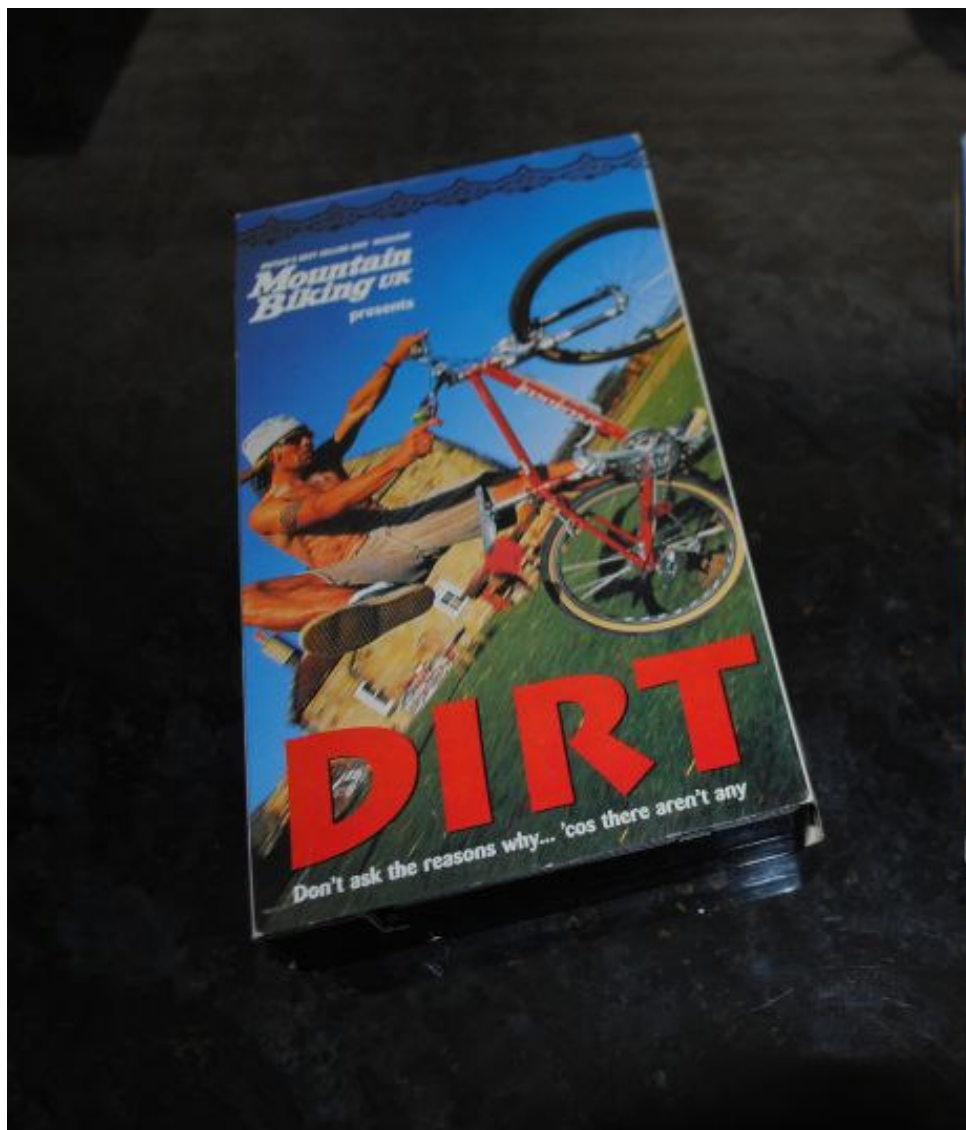
Twenty one years ago the magazine Mountain Biking UK thought it would be a good idea to make a video. There had been mountain biking videos before but they had been mainly informative and instructional and as a result made for rather dry viewing. I've still got the one with the section where Gary Allen talks the viewer through ideal starter bike in his shop. MBUK took a cue from the surf videos available at the time and put together 45 minutes of feel good viewing set to music and starring some of the UK stars of the day, namely Jason McRoy, Dave Hemmings, Scott Dommett and Rob Warner with a short section featuring 'Jumping Jez Avery'. The film was shot in the coastal north-east of England in late spring sunshine with the surroundings looking fresh, green and vibrant, in sharp contrast to the other big MTB video of the time, Chainspotting, which appeared to have been shot in the depths of winter with low light, bare trees and industrial backdrops. Chainspotting may have been arty (or it may not have been) but inspiring it certainly wasn't.

The action in Dirt starts with 'the boyz' breakfast in the garden of a stone cottage being invaded by a pair of goats intent on stealing their cornflakes. Very quickly the goats end up wearing the cornflakes and the boyz go off to ride their bikes in the sunshine. The bikes are typical of the mid nineties, a Specialized hardtail, an Orange P7 and others similar. 26 inch wheels, canti' or vee brakes, 24 gears, all the sort of stuff that those of us who were riding back then would have owned ourselves. The trails the boyz ride are all natural, through the heather up on the moors, a swoopy jumpy spot on the cliffs, a twisty path down to the beach. The riding, carving turns through the woods, the skids and wheelies, any of us in the club could aspire to (OK, wheelies that look good are a skill that I have yet to fully master). And that's what make this film so great. It's full of stuff you could imagine yourself doing on a club ride or weekend away. A highlight is Rob Warner wheelying through a ford, hitting a rock and taking a tumble in the water. When he gets up he looks very grumpy indeed. Don't we all know someone who's done something like that?

If you look at video clips from recent years, maybe Danny Macaskill's trials productions, maybe huge jumps and aerial acrobatics from today's freeride stars, the content is undeniably very impressive but doesn't it just make you feel a little bit inadequate? Exotic locations you know you'll never visit, terrain us mere mortals would think twice about walking down and bikes so single minded few of us would ever justify buying. What kind of inspiration is that? In Dirt even the video effects and editing are cheesy enough that with the advent of cheap video cameras and laptop editing any of us could now make something similar at home. Add in appearances by a couple of unsigned bands and the whole 'down to earth' ethos is as complete as it can ever be.

Sadly Jason McRoy died the same year in a motorcycle accident but Dirt will

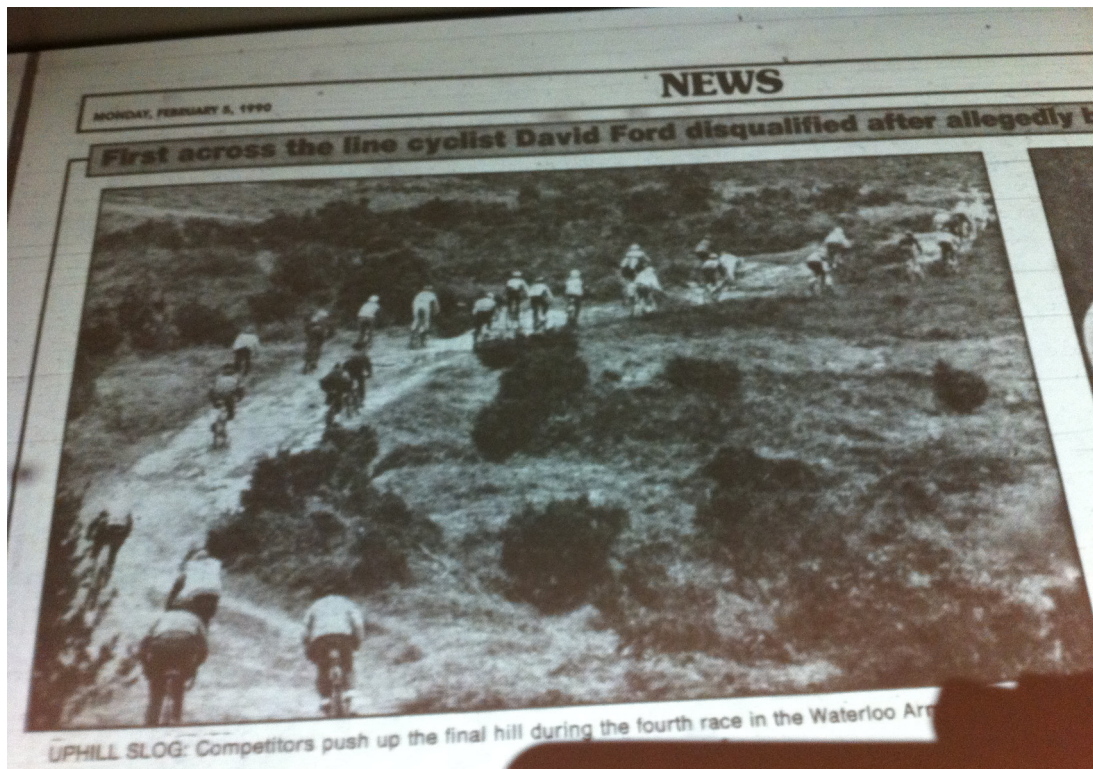
always be a reminder of the early days of mountain biking when mountain bikes were just 'mountain bikes', riding was just riding and the sun seemed to shine a bit more often. If you've never seen the film and are wondering what I've just been waffling on about then go to Youtube and type in <https://youtu.be/TOG9cXERWhw> where some kind soul has been good enough to upload the film in three parts. After watching it I'm sure you'll be counting the hours until your next off-road ride, even more impatiently if the current dry spell holds. Me, I'm off now to dig out my copy and see if the video recorder still works.











Above: -Picture from the Southern Evening Echo published 5/2/199

Below: -First prizegiving at the Waterloo, shows what a small-scale and amateur event it was. (Mike Hanlon)



New FORCE Early Days

Part 1 – The landscape before explicit cycling restrictions

By Martin Wheat

In the beginning was the Forest, in which kings frolicked and prospered, or not, depending on their fortune. As time passed an accommodation was reached with the locals that separated the “inclosures” from open forest. This evolved to the recent position where Commoners, answering to the Verderers’ Court, grazed their livestock on the open forest and rounded them up annually (the drift) for counting, branding and selection of some for market; and the Forestry Commission harvested its timber from the inclosures. Latterly, nothing much disturbed the peace but thrice weekly in the season the “hounds and the horn in the morning” of the foxhunt with their members gaily bedecked in pink, and a weekly pursuit of stags, also with hounds. This was, after all, the purpose for which the Forest had been set aside. Just for fun, commoners would occasionally race on their ponies across the forest, as they still do; it was a working forest, with occasional games for the residents.

People used paths and tracks through the forest as natural transport routes, including on bikes once they became viable. Later, local lads would take their ‘tracker’ bikes onto the forest for a bit of off-road fun (by the ‘70s, Avon ‘Gripster’ 26”x1 3/8” tyres from cycle speedway were the thing). Doubtless, members of the “Roughstuff Fellowship” founded in 1955 would have brought their minority branch of cycle leisure to the Forest too.

As the population’s leisure time expanded after the war more people discovered the forest as a place to spend their time: equestrians; dog walkers; hikers and campers all converged. The advent of motor cars made the area much easier to reach and long-term residents and commoners felt the tranquillity and “traditional nature” of the forest under threat. In 1971 access restrictions began: ditches and fences prevented driving across open forest; car parks were built and campers constrained to designated sites.

And then ...

Over in California some guys on ‘clunkers’ started having more fun riding down hills than was good for the rest of the world and in the mid 1980s a ripple of mountain bikes lapped across our shores. To begin with there were few so the

chance of seeing even a tyre track was slim, much less that of meeting another rider.

The same joy that attracted those Californians turned the ripple to a wave so that Nick Wateridge, the then publican of the Waterloo Arms, had a number of regulars with bikes looking for a bit of competition. From April '89 he started organising events on the first Sunday morning of the month in aid of Riding for the Disabled. Ride by any off-road route from a start point to the pub; first one there wins. Simple. There were variations: some had way points like trailquests and there was an August evening time trial around Foldsgate Inclosure. The events quickly attracted attention from local cyclists so that from fewer than a dozen riders, by the following winter there would be 80 on the start line. Allan K, Gary from GA Cycles and I were all enthusiastic participants. The Southampton Evening Echo covered the 4th in what was then scheduled to be a 12-event series with a full-page spread on 5th Feb. 1990, quoting Nick: "If we can raise £500 or £600 for charity in a year and give the lads a bit of fun, it's got to be good". After that, a firm word with Nick from the Deputy Surveyor of the Forest brought it all to an abrupt but unsurprising end.

So through to the early '90s off-road riders were happy to apply the general dispensation for cyclists to ride wherever horse-riders go on bridleways equally to the whole of the Forest. It seemed though, that in the summer traffic queues every third car visiting the New Forest carried mountain bikes ready to take advantage of this freedom, albeit few strayed far from their campsites.

The local guardians of that tranquillity and traditional nature of the Forest saw the hordes of cyclists tearing noisily around the Forest in lurid clothing damaging the trails (and any similarity to the hunt is obviously irrelevant) as a potent threat and raised their pressure on the Forestry Commission to control the 'invasion'.

To be continued.

If you have anything to add for this period – to Feb. '92 – please post it on the Forum or write to the Editor.



Above: -Start at Stoney Cross, shows how it had grown. (Gary Allen)

Below: -Finishers at Bolton's Bench, shows why the event might have been noticed by the public. (Gary Allen)



The Solent Slog

By Allan Knight

Its all about the exploring for me, I love finding new places, new trails, and trying new things. I've been mucking about on bikes all my life, and more specifically mountain biking for thirty years now, so keeping it fresh and exciting means not only looking further afield but sometimes, a little closer to home too.

So, on a cool grey and breezy winters day, we wheeled the fatbikes out of our respective garages, sheds and kitchens, with the aim of hitting the very nearest bit of beach, and seeing how far we could get. Now, in all successful explorations, its all about the planning. So we had checked out the pubs en-route and what cider they served, we'd checked the weather (it was wintery), and we'd even checked ferry times. When riding on the beach, its also essential to check the tide, to see if there will *be* a beach. We did that. What we didn't do was check that our tide-checker knew the difference between low and high tide.

Into Southampton we rumbled, beach-pressure rubber sucking at the tarmac, through the parks and over the Itchen Bridge. Wiggle through the Vosper's housing development and we're on the beach! Except there wasn't much as the tide was well in. Even 5" wide tyres struggle in the soft gravel at the top of the beach.

We'd dragged Mike along for this ride, a definite non-fatbiker having sold his last year but borrowing a 'spare' for the day, with promises of an easy roll on hard sand or packed gravel, a few beers, a boat ride and scenic views of the Solent. Needless to say the moaning started from the minute we hit the soft stuff, face like a world gurning champ and all the pace of a lame snail. We tried to cheer him up with stories of tail-winds, sunsets and topless bathers but he just wasn't having it.

We plugged along past Weston Shore, the Sunday snoozers parked up in their cars catching flies or watching the ships. Round the front of Netley Castle, the waves lap at the wall, requiring timing and a spurt of pace to get past. At Netley village we had to duck inland as the tide was too high, through the country park and past the old hospital (one of England's most haunted spots apparently, always good for a visit on a night ride!) and back onto the beach.

Passing Hamble oil terminal, we raced the tide to get past the pilings, Mike still lagging and getting a splash from the waves. At Hamble Point, we had a short

break sitting on the old gun emplacement, bemused sailors from the marina wondering why 4 grown men were pretending to shoot down Messerschmitts. From there we rolled down into Hamble and waited for the little pink Ferry to take us over the Hamble river to Warsash, piloted by a proper Captain Birdseye. If you think the ferry looks small, when its fully loaded with 4 fatbikes, 4 fat blokes and crossing when the tides in full flow, it feels like your floating in a bathtub!

The other side of the river suddenly feels a lot less urban industrial, and a lot more remote. From the shingle spit of the Newtown nature reserve, we followed the beach under the cliffs to the Solent Breezes holiday village. Here we had to climb up and navigate the mobile homes as the tide was so high, before picking up the (diverted, because of landslips) Solent Way along the top of the cliff. Ashley and Pikey decided on a scramble back down to the beach, while Mike and I stuck to the sensible if muddy option at the top. Converging further on back on the beach, we stopped for leftover Christmas cake between the cliff and the sea, the Isle of Wight having completely disappeared in the gloom.

Passing Titchfield Haven and Hill Head, the prom here had almost completely washed away in the winter storms. As we navigated the broken concrete, a freak wave came in and splashed up, soaking my back and filling Ashley's boot with cold sea water. Brrrr!

Hopping groynes, we continued on the beach past the Daedalus airfield (no gliders flying today!) and the entrance to the hovercraft museum. This is well worth a visit on one of their open days to see some of the truly British shed-engineering and quite bizarre craft they have, as well as the huge cross-channel hovers.

We finally got to Lee-on-the-Solent, the Sunday prom strollers turning to watch the row of damp, tired and hungry fat-tired cyclists picking their way along the high-tide line. Here we decided to call it a day, over two hours of pedalling on soft gravel taking its toll on tired legs. On other rides starting at Warsash we'd continued past the army training camp, Gillkicker point and made it right round to Gosport, but that can be saved for the summer. For now it was time for the pub!

Only a brief stop though as we had to be back for the little pink ferry by 3.30 or risk a very long ride round via Bursledon. So back we headed, across the Hamble river before a longer stop at the King & Queen at Hamble. Robin joined

us here, and as you can imagine, it turned into a rather long and sociable affair. As well as a good selection of ciders they also have some rather tasty but dangerous rums. I, of course, had to try them all.

Things are a little bit vague from here, but Mike had stopped moaning, Ashley's sock had dried out, it was very dark, and we got back to Southampton. We definitely stopped on the beach to watch the bright lights of Fawley refinery and passing ferries as I have a photo. The tide had finally gone out, so we had hard fast sand and gravel to spin happily along. We may have stopped at Weatherspoons at Ocean Village, and we may have had a kebab from the van by the Harley Davidson shop.

All-in-all not a bad little adventure, and one we'll definitely repeat on a warm summer's day, even getting all the way to Gosport if the tides right – who knows, even Mike might be persuaded out again!

Total distance about 40 miles, 30 on soft gravel!

Photos at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/47933770@N07/albums/72157662760999601>



Bored, Rigid?

By Tim Wheeler

Bike companies have given us astonishing suspension forks that soak up bumps and smooth out our rides for us. They've invested huge amounts of time and money improving them so that technology that was once exotic and massively expensive has now become standard on every mountain bike. Surely those who take off their suspension forks and replace them with rigid forks wilful and perverse to throw that gift back in the faces of bike companies? So I always believed, until one day I went rigid by accident. Since I had both a nice suspension bike and a hardtail, I decided to set up the hardtail for road rides (a whole other story LOL) with rigid fork and smooth narrow tyres. I had no intention of riding rigid off road, but one day I discovered (at the last minute) that I had a broken gears on my main mountain bike: I didn't want to miss the club ride I was about to do, so I quickly swapped the big knobbly mountain bike wheels to the rigid bike! I set off rather gingerly from Olivers Battery. I had let some air out of my tyres and also I'd once read somewhere about relaxing your wrists and arms, and not gripping the handlebars too tightly - so I was attempting all that. Even so, I was expecting painful wrists, tennis elbows and shaken shoulders to set in at any moment. To my surprise I found that I was enjoying the ride rather than merely surviving it. I was so impressed I started taking the rigid out on a regular basis. It is now 'go-to' Forest and Winchester bike. Having said all that, I should say that 'rigid' does have limitations. I discovered this when took it to the Purbecks and very nearly came a cropper when I hit a dry stutter-bump section descending Nine Barrow Down at speed. Suddenly my vision turned to a blur and my face probably looked like that of an astronaut during bad re-entry. Only very heavy braking and a big dose of luck saved me from a bad crash. So what are the pluses of rigid? My rigid fork cost £75, whereas the Fox 100mm 29er fork it replaced probably cost £500-600 - even cheap suspension forks aren't cheap! Factor in lot's of time cleaning your suspension fork and most likely annual professional servicing too, and it's plain that running a suspension fork during a British winter is expensive. A rigid fork will probably be 2 lbs lighter than a suspension fork and require zero maintenance. When you stand up and lean on your handlebars or roll off a step, the front of your bike doesn't 'dive down' and try to throw you over your bars. Everything feels a little more lively and exciting. There's also the matter of that smug feeling from having dispensed with the technological assistance that you previously thought absolutely essential. You can make your rigid more like a suspension bike with wider rims and fatter tyres. Clearly there's a whole world of fat and 'plus' bikes to explore. So far I've been reluctant to step into that world as I've felt that I want my bikes to ride long distances and get me up steep hills and I feel there's a trade-off to be made between 'cush & capability' vs. weight and rolling resistance. Being the of wimpy, non-technical persuasion, so far I've erred on the side of lower weight and not tried wide rims and 3 inch tyre, But... as they say: 'Never Say Never!'

Events Calendar

These are events that some of us are expecting to attend, some organised by the club and some not. If you like the sound of any of them please go along and increase the club presence. In the case of events involving an overnight stay it would be a good idea to contact one of the others going to ensure everyone can camp close together.

20th to 22nd may 2016 - Singlspeed European Championship

The 2016 event is being hosted by the Slovenians close to the town of Kobarid in the Alpine foothills. The venue is little more than 60 miles from either Lubljiana or Trieste airports so either a short transfer by taxi or a doable day ride. All the information for this event is currently on Facebook in very good English with a website to come when entries open. At the time of writing a return flight to Lubljiana from Stanstead is £136.

August Bank Holiday weekend - The Big bike Bash

A long weekend of bikes, beer and music at Avon Tyrell Activity Centre over on the western edge of the New Forest. This family friendly event is organised by club members on a voluntary basis. If you would like to help please contact Robin Knight.

££ CLUB DISCOUNTS ££

The following shops offer a discount on presentation
of your membership card:

Cycle Experience

Brookley Road, Brockenhurst tel: 01590 624204

179 Barrack Road, Christchurch tel: 01202 486278

10-20 South Street, Hythe tel: 02380 840765

Cycle World Wessex

36 Thornhill Park Road, Southampton. tel: 02380 471140

109a Winchester Road, Romsey. tel: 01794 513344

373 London Road, Portsmouth. tel: 02392 666551

Sandy Balls Cycle Centre

Godshill, Fordingbridge. tel: 01425 657707

Primera

183 Bournemouth Rd, Parkstone

244 Charminster Rd, Charminster

Bicycle Barn

63 Old Milton Road, New Milton, BH25 6DN. tel: 01425 616070

Perfect Balance Cycles

87 Junction Road, Totton. tel: 02380 871777

Hargroves Cycles

150 Commercial Rd Totton. tel: 02380 862011, www.hargrovescycles.co.uk

Also in Winchester, Chichester & Fareham

Peter Hansford Cycles

91 Olivers Battery Road South, Winchester tel: 01962 877555

Southampton Road, Park Gate

32a Hursley Road, Chandlers Ford

Ride

111 Commercial Road, Parkstone. tel: 01202 741744

The Hub Cycleworks

105-107 Shirley Road, Southampton.

Hampshire Trailer and Roofrack Centre

NEW

Solent Business Centre, Millbrook Road, Southampton. tel: 02380 333111

Reader's Bikes

A Tale Of Two Travers

In the past year or so both Derek and Martin have bought Travers 29+ frames. They've built them up distinctly differently though.

First up, Dereks bike:

Having ridden a Surly Krampus 29+ for a year, I have really enjoyed the different cycling experience that 3" tyres give and the added confidence of having something sturdy up front when the front wheel drops into the unknown, be it a puddle or deep undergrowth, and a beefy rear tyre when 'thumping' rather than 'jumping' over large logs. Being a bit of a softie I like the extra comfort that my suspension seatpost gives, but it's design means there is an inbuilt 3cm setback and on steep climbs with the weight further back it causes the front wheel to go light. This of course gave me the excuse to go for a Travers frame which as well as being my first Titanium frame also gave me the option to make some design changes to the frame and move the seatpost 3cm further forward to allow for my laid back suspension seatpost and restore a good climbing position. My Travers frame also brought some standard changes for 2016 such as internal cable routing and the wider 148mm rear hub spacing. The wider rear hub pointed me in the direction of a SRAM chainset because apparently you need a 'boost' crank with a chainring offset of +3mm chainline, to allow for the 6mm increase in hub width.

The bike stops with an excellent set of Shimano XT brakes procured through Keith on a special deal!

My ideal setup for climbing steep hills is with a single 30 tooth front chainring, and oval in shape which is the new round (if you believe the blurb). An 11 tooth cog in the rear cassette and a 30 tooth front cog would be too low geared on faster tracks so I looked for a 10 tooth cog in the rear cassette, for a 10% increase in gear ratio. A rather expensive 11 speed SRAM GX 10/42 cassette was therefore called for. Initial impressions are that an 11 speed chain does not engage the cogs properly when thickly coated in mud, though further wearing in may improve this. The mistake I did make was going for a gold coloured chain, so I cannot tell if it's going rusty or not.

Going back to the frame design, my bespoke 'mods' such as a straight seat tube with extra bottle mounts, the bottom bracket is 1 cm higher for better negotiating

the New Forest ruts, and the top tube is 2cm higher to give a bigger space for the Beerbabe frame bag.

Having opted to keep my suspension seatpost and the comfort it gives, it made sense to balance this with suspension forks at the front, though there is a big weight penalty of about 1.5Kgs over the Travers rigid carbon forks. The limited range of 29+ suspension forks meant that I ended up with a pair of Manitou Magnums with the 110mm wide boost hub.

Having 'loaded' the weight with my comfort options it didn't seem appropriate to spend £1k on carbon handlebars and carbon wheel rims, and so I went for the Sun Ringle Mulefut 50 wheels, which Trek put on their 29+ bikes. Because the 3" inner tubes weigh 400 gms each I decided to bite the bullet and go tubeless which so far has been painless, with a weight saving of 800gms.

Apologies for mixing units but the total bike weight comes in at 34lbs with no carbon components, so probably about 10-12lbs heavier than Martin's, though my frame is also a size larger at XL.

At the moment I am experimenting with tyre sizes following a club members outburst of laughter when seeing the tidal wave of water being pushed forward by my 3.25" bulldozer tyres, leading me to look at downsizing to 2.5" tyres in the winter.

And Martin's:

Why buy a new bike?

From time to time a new technology appears and over the next few years is adopted by all leading riders – SPDs, effective suspension and disc brakes all qualify. 29in wheels arrived and offer some advantages, and fat bikes created a new niche about the same time. Could a compromise between them in the shape of a 29er+ be the next game-changer?

Rolling Chassis

When I was looking in 2014, not many makers produced them. High in the net search was always Travers, with a Titanium frame using standard width hubs and an eccentric BB to run a hub gear without a chain tensioner; both features appealed.

Travers also offer a very light rigid carbon fork with 15mm through axle that seemed a better option for supporting the wheel than my NukeProof 29er fork with 9mm QR.

The biggest risk in a 29er+ format seemed the rolling weight of wheels; too

much and the bike could feel ponderous. Addressing this are carbon rims on Hope hubs, tyres at the lower weight end of those available then, run tubeless, all through Mr Travers.

Transmission

I transferred 2x10 gearing from an older machine (Middleburn chainset and gripshifted SRAM XO), unsure what range I might need, but that quickly evolved to a single Middleburn spider/ring with a 40-tooth cassette expander sprocket.

Finishing

Stem and saddle came from my parts bin, which could not provide brakes, headset and seatclamp so they came from Hope; flat carbon bars from Travers (700mm - time I tried something wider than 580mm); flyweight seatpost from Crank Bros; mudguarding from Mudhugger.

How it worked out.

Wow. This feels like the way mountain bikes should have been from day one. Rolling. I simply haven't wanted to ride any other bike since I started using this one.

On soft ground, grass and heather the tyres roll easily on their 10 and 12 psi! On roads the rolling resistance should be big, but I think it's just the noise from the Vee Fat Trax at the back.

I run out of top-end gears on road downslopes, and I'm sure I'll need more at the bottom end when I hit a proper hill, plus the step where the 18t sprocket used to be is sometimes really annoying.

The seatpost broke but was warranty replaced; perhaps too flyweight to run at minimum insertion.

It's still a fully rigid bike, albeit with more tyre compliance than most, so on rough or choppy ground I'm having to unweight the saddle – good full suspension is undoubtedly faster – but it's only 10kg and still feels fast.

Where next?

1 x 11 – it's the way to go. It's been such fun even as it is that I've not tried it with the hub gear, but that may come one winter soon.

To deal with a trail centre, Welsh hills or the Peak District, I'm going to feel more comfortable with a Dropper seatpost and a little front suspension, compromising weight for performance.

If you've spent some time and effort getting your bike just the way you want it or it's got a bit of history to it please share it with the club by sending the editor a picture and a few words about how and why you've done what you have.



