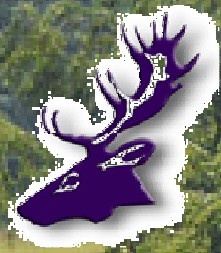


NEWFORCE

July 2014 Issue 132





Could the heat above really be worse than the cold and rain we have to endure so often in the UK?



Editorial

By Keith Whitten

Welcome to the summer issue of Newforce. As I'm British and we're all here because we enjoy a particular outdoor pursuit it seems quite natural to talk about the weather.

So far 2014 has been a bit of a mixed bag with a bit of everything. Some warm dry patches, some cool wet bits which overall makes this year just on the disappointing side of average so far. But aren't we a little overdue for a really good one? I think the last time that happened was 2004.

Some theories of global warming and climate change suggest that for the British Isles the reality will be less sun and more rain. Not fun. It was during one of the cool wet patches in May that I posted on a worldwide motorcycle forum that I am a member of asking what folks had noticed over the last few years in their locality. It didn't take long for some of the Americans to start posting denials climate change was in any way human influenced and then it all degenerated into a pro/anti Obama argument, which had it's own fascinations but was quickly deleted by an over zealous moderator. Here are a selection of the replies that managed to stay on topic:

Canterbury, New Zealand:

Our months weather have moved by about 3 months. That's to say that the weather I remember when I was twenty something that used to happen in February now happens in April/May

Chatanooga, Tennessee:

Stronger storms, and a huge increase in tornadoes over the last few years when we rarely saw any until a few years ago.

Germany:

More extreme weather. We've had two 'century' floods in the last decade. Stronger storms, more rain and generally more erratic weather than 20 years ago.

Modesto, California:

No rain and it's HOT.

Northwest united States:

I have tomatoes in May. Never before have I had that happen.

South west Australia:

We're pretty used to cold winters and hot summers but last year were two extreme record breaking events. -3 degrees last winter 2013 and in January 2014 a heatwave swept across WA, SA and Vic where temperatures hit 48 degrees. I took a picture of the thermometer in the shed. This is not up north where these temps sometimes happen but only 100 miles from the south coast.

Tri cities, Tennessee:

We have had weather and temperature records broken here constantly over the last 7 or 8 years. Record heat, record droughts and then record rainfall amounts the next year. Record thunderstorms, wave of tornadoes for the first time in 70 years. This year alone we had a snowstorm near the end of April and then record heat on the first of May.

Seven replies most certainly isn't a comprehensive global survey but no-one replied that nothing had changed. As I write this we're going through one of the driest, sunniest and warmest patches we've seen for a quite some time, so if you think this issue has arrived a little late then it's because I've been out making the most of the fine riding before the rain returns.

Cover photo courtesy of Nigel Aiken



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The Hub Cycleworks

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Your Committee

Committee meetings are held regularly. If there are any points you wish to raise please feel free to contact any of the Committee Members and the point(s) will be discussed at the subsequent meeting. Alternatively come along to the meeting yourself and join in with the discussions

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Club Policy & Ride Aims

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

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

Fortnightly Sunday rides, Thursdays nights plus adhoc trips and events

We meet as a friendly group to ride together, once a fortnight as published on the web-site.

Members group together for ad hoc trips, or attend organised race/randonee/challenge rides.

Please refer to our published Conditions of Membership - and enjoy your cycling!

Safety First

We require cycle helmets to be worn on all Club rides: be prepared for weather changes and carry

- A drink
- Puncture repair kit / spare tubes
- Emergency contact details in the event of an accident

We also request that you take the time to ensure that your cycle is in good working order before the start of the ride, eg, no cracks in the frame or splits in the tyres.

Committee Meetings

These are held on the 2nd Tuesday of every third month

At The New Forest Inn, Emery Down from 8pm

All members are invited to attend—it's your club so come and have a say on how it's run!

Next meeting is: Tuesday 9th September

All welcome!

Finding The Ride Location

We suggest use of **www.streetmap.co.uk**

The search box asks for the **location**

....using our ride location references for example:-

Farley Mount is SU433293 so enter this in the search box, click the 'Landranger Box' and then click 'search'

- you will then see a map and an arrow pointing to the location
- to increase or decrease the scale of the map click on the buttons
- by changing the scale you will see where our ride is in relation to other land-

Future Rides

The ride locations are set at the committee meetings. These generally follow the pattern of one ride 'in Forest' and two rides 'out of Forest'.

If you have a suggestion—let us know!

Ride Reviews

We always welcome members to write a short review, so after your next ride or cycling holiday, why not just 'pop pen to paper' or 'fingers to keyboard' and let us know how it was for you!

**Email your stories to keith@perfectbalancecycles.co.uk
Or use the 'Private Message' function on the bulletin board**

Photos on the web...

To promote our varied mountain biking activities we encourage Members to submit their cycle related photos for publication and linking to the newforce website.

Please email Allan at allank@newforce.org.uk

"Hot" Vindaloo, Madras and Jalfrezi

characteristic- strenuous & technical riding

We always have enthusiastic Members ready to attend for a fast-ish tour, usually with a pub stop either half way or at the end. So don't forget to bring a little beer money out with you or be prepared to wash everyone else's bikes afterwards. If Eleanor's out on the Jalfrezi night rides then expect a stop half way to scoff some of her truly wondrous baking.

"Medium" Tikka Masala

characteristic- moderately strenuous & some technical riding

To suit a medium ride we have regular Members in attendance to offer a less demanding pace.

"Cool" Korma

characteristic- smooth & non technical riding - potentially suitable for novices

A shorter, steadier ride with more emphasis on enjoying the scenery and company than breaking records.

"Family Rides"

We are trying to involve the family and youngsters and need your contribution to organise events: rides will depend on ability, using easy tracks with plenty of breaks and tea stops! These happen on an ad hoc basis so if the weather's looking good and you're taking the kids out don't be shy, post on the message board.

And yes, we have named our groups after curries!

Ride Locations

Watch the Bulletin Board and Rides pages on the website for details

If you are not sure about coming along or need directions to the meeting place give someone a call: phone numbers on the inside front cover of this newsletter.

Ride Times - Sundays

We meet at 9.30 am and try to leave prompt at 10am, back by 1pm usually, or later for day rides.

Sunday 06 July 2014

Stansted Forest, near Emsworth

(ref SU 755 111)

Designated pub: to be decided on the day.

This ride start point will give us easy access to parts of the Sussex Border Path and the Monarchs Way, and is perfect for exploring the undulating landscape between the South Downs Way from QE Park to Harting and the A27, Havant to Chichester stretch. There are some great trails, picturesque Sussex villages nestling in the downs and one or two delightful pubs that we could choose from for our after ride refreshment. The route will most likely be east towards Kingley Vale then northwards to the SDW, west towards QE Park and then returning southwards to Stansted Forest.

Easy travel to and from guarantees maximum ride time but the hills will probably not be advisable for participants riding for the first time with the club. Newbies would be better advised to join us on an in-Forest ride where the options for a gentler introduction and a more readily available escape route present themselves.

Sunday 20 July 2014

Ashurst Hospital (½ Day Ride with an option for a

FULL day)

(ref SU 335 103)

Designated pub: The Happy Cheese

This is an easy starting point for those of us living on the Southampton and Winchester side of the forest. There is ample free parking available so there shouldn't be any problems for those of you arriving by car. We have club members living in or near Ashurst who usually ride to the start point. From the car park which is conveniently situated right next to the Happy Cheese pub, we can go through Woodlands, on along to Lyndhurst, Boltons Bench, Denny Lodge area and back by a circular route taking us through Deerleap or of course go the other way round taking in "the Wire" and other popular Thursday points of interest.

Of course, the full day option will go farther afield.

The half day ride will be a good place for newcomers to find their pace. The tracks are reasonably forgiving and the surfaces hold up well in poorer weather, although as this is right in the middle of summer, glorious sunshine is guaranteed.

Sunday 03 August 2014 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.

At this time of year there will not be much mud unless the weather gods are not smiling on us and so the tracks are pretty much all rideable. There will be some deep ruts to negotiate where the erosion of the winter conditions carves some formidable obstacles along some tracks but don't let that put you off; count it as a valuable lesson in staying upright.

Sunday 17 August 2014 Ride from Roger's House and BBQ afterwards (ref SU 438 158)

Designated post ride refreshment: Garden BBQ

The start point is at the northern boundary of Southampton close to junction 5 of M27 and south of the airport. The gathering point will be the car parking area in front of the parade of shops in the centre of Swaythling, opposite the new students' halls of residence (the one that looks like a giant baked bean tin) near Swaythling railway station. The ride will take us along the Itchen Navigation Canal to Bishopstoke, then via Stoke Park Woods towards Marwell. Beyond that lies Owslebury, Morestead, and the start of the South Downs Way between Winchester and Cheriton, in fact enough tracks and trails to entertain us for as long as we like.

Afterwards, back to Roger's house for food and drink. Other than the car park at the gathering point, there is another car park with about a dozen spaces close by at map ref SU 437 156 (approx. 150m along the road towards Portswood) and there is ample secure bike parking at the house itself. Directions to the house will be given on the day to participants. As before on BBQs and Garden Parties, there will be a £5.00 cover charge

per person and please bring drinks of your choosing in sufficient quantities to keep you going.

Sunday 31 August 2014 Wootton Bridge (ref SZ 250 997)

Designated pub: The Rising Sun, Bashley Common Road (approx 1 mile south of the car park).

This start point can take in Wilverley Inclosure, Holmsley, Brownhill, Setthorns and the old railway line between Burley and Brockenhurst and any number of loops can be added to this basic framework and distance can be easily altered to match the composition of the various ride groups. No really nasty hills but lots of good fast tracks.

The ride will be suitable for newcomers with no major hills and the tracks are forgiving and the surfaces hold up well, although there can be some persistent sticky patches even in the driest of conditions.

Sunday 14 September 2014 Corfe castle (FULL day ride)
(ref SY 955 827)

Designated pub: not applicable – lunchtime pub stop on 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.

This ride is not recommended for newcomers where hills and distance may prove to be their downfall. 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.

Sunday 28 September 2014 Linford Bottom near Ringwood
(ref SU 182 072)

I had to go back to 2008 to find the last time we rode from here. If you are coming from the Southampton direction, take the A31 westwards all the way to Ringwood. At the bottom of Poulner Hill you take the slip road off and turn back towards Southampton, get on the eastbound side of the dual carriageway and go back up Poulner Hill again. When you get almost to the top of the hill, there is a nursery/garden centre on the left. Go past this and then take the next turn left onto a narrow side road to head towards Hangersley and Shobley and ultimately to the car park at Linford Bottom. The routes available are across Rockford Common, Linwood, Ibsley Common and on towards Abbots Well or perhaps southwards via the underpass at Picket Post towards Burley Street, Dur Hill, Bisterne Common and Holmsley.

A dry period will give you a mixture of rutted horse –hoof stutter or dry sand that challenges directional control and needs a good push on the pedals whereas a wet, soggy period will give you a squelching, slippery track surface or a gritty grinding paste guaranteed to make you rush to the shop for new brake pads next morning. You will also need to pedal with a bit more vigour over this terrain. This late in September there is no guaranteeing which way the dice will fall.

Sunday 12 October 2014

Queen Elizabeth Park (on the A3 near Petersfield (½ Day Ride with an option for a FULL day)
(ref SU 719 184)

Designated post ride refreshments at the Visitor Centre cafe

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 26 October 2014 Burley (opposite cricket pitch) (ref SU 214 028)

Designated post-ride pub: Queen's Head or the White Buck to be decided on the day

Castle Hill is always a good choice for the energetic ones, whilst the old railway line beckons for those who want a gentler ride. For those who want a change, then Bisterne Common offers an escape from the usual New Forest tracks. All these options have reasonably good surfaces where the seasonal weather does not bring too many disadvantages to progress. It is possible to take in Dur Hill where it forms a perimeter track right on the edge of the Forest boundary but this will be slow going. In the other direction, there lies the chance of Burley Outer Rails tracks and onwards to Bolderwood; these tracks of course are typical Inclosure gravel surfaces which will roll reasonably well.



THE NEWSLETTER IS
PUBLISHED QUARTERLY
THE NEXT ISSUE IS OCTOBER
DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES IS
SEPTEMBER 30TH
IF YOU HAVE ENJOYED ONE
OF THESE RIDES
SEND IN A SHORT REVIEW....PLEASE!

EVENTS CALENDAR

These are non-club organised events that some of us are expecting to attend. 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.

July 12th to 13th London to Brighton Night Ride.

Keith Whitten will be taking part in this mass charity road ride for the British Heart Foundation.

July 26th to 27th Bontrager Twentyfour 12.

The Vndaloos will be out in their Sumo suits riding in this 12 or 24 hour race held at Newnham Park just outside Plymouth. Expect a trackside campsite and Craig's disco through the night.

August 22nd to 25th. The Big Bike Bash

A number of Newforce members are on the organising committee of this charity event held at Avon Tyrell on the western side of the New Forest. Any voluntary help will be much appreciated and no doubt rewarded with a free beer or two. Or just pay your money and enjoy the party.

September 5th to 7th SSUK.

Annual gathering of UK singlespeeders, this year somewhere near Cannock. Details can currently be found on Facebook if you search for 'SSUK14' or www.ssuk14.co.uk. If you want to be in with a chance of winning something worth having start growing your beard now.

September 28th

The first Gorrick Autumn Classic race meeting. The north east Hampshire venues for these races always make for a great ride whether you're intent on being competitive or just fancy a good workout on some of the sweetest singletrack in the south of England. Find out more at www.gorrick.com

Brecons May 2014 medium group

By Ian Taylor and Derek Johnson

For those that did not go to Afan, most of the Cwm Carn group arrived at the visitor centre car park 30 minutes before the appointed hour of 11am on the Friday, with time to go to the Raven's Cafe for a coffee (and cake) before the off.

Seven of us, John, Ian, Tanya, Martin, Sue, Derek and Penni headed up the Twrch trail but none of us saw the mythical wild boar that gave it's name to the route. It was a long and steady climb and by the half way point Ian, Derek, Sue and Penni told the others not to wait but continue on their own. Luckily all that height was not given away in one big rush, the course designers made good use of it and strung it out for a long descent back to the visitor centre. But beware as you near the bottom, if you see a big berm do not build up speed expecting there to be another berm on the next bend!

Bravely, Sue joined the fast group for a second loop, while Ian and Derek decided to invest £1 in a nice hot shower (not together!) and £2.99 for a

cream tea, whilst waiting.

The drive up to the Talybont Youth Hostel was quite quick but there were no signposts until the final turn, off the tarmac road. The place itself is isolated in a delightful spot and had an interesting courtyard layout, if somewhat distant from the village itself (I never walked it so will let someone else describe the experience !)

On Saturday the four strong medium group of Ian, Derek, Penni and Sue had a gentle warm up, cycling along the canal towpath to Bwlch. This would all change into a considerable climb, first on road and then off road.

About fifteen minutes after we had left the tarmac and got onto a more level piece of pastureland, we could hear hard breathing behind us as the faster group drew level having spent extra time seeking out mud at the beginning of their ride. We then moved off as one large group until we got to the start of the descent and we gave the fast group a head start so as not to end in a big pile. Following on from the bottom we traversed around a hill that was gouged out by water run-offs that were very muddy and hard to negotiate. On the last one Penni gave it her all, but came out the other side all covered in mud.

The fast group then took the left fork, Steve saying that the way the medium group were going was unrideable back in October. At first we didn't know what the fuss was about, but later on Derek ended up upside down in a

stream, and Penni used the delay to stand in the water and wash off the mud she had fallen into previously. Whether the cold water was the cause or not, Derek developed cramp and decided to leave the rest of the medium group to tackle the big second hill on their own, and limped off to find the canal towpath back to the hostel.....

As Derek turned right towards the canal Sue, Penni and Ian turned left into the hills, and what a hill! The next kilometre or so rose 330metres, an average 30% climb that resulted in much pushing albeit under beautiful blue skies and sunshine. After a stop to recuperate the next couple of kilometres seemed relatively easy at a mere 10% but we were put to shame by the frog that had spawned tadpoles in a tiny pool on the track at around 550m, now you know why they have such massive thighs.

Who should be sunning themselves at the top of the climb but the fast group who had taken a different but equally strenuous route. One final push and a ride along Mynydd Llysiau ridge with spectacular views in all directions took us to the high point of the day at 662 metres. It was, as they say, all downhill from there on with a 3 kilometre grassy track downhill at speed, on to the road and thence to the pub at Llanbedr for a welcome refreshment.

The run back from the pub via Crickhowell was child's play compared with the rest of the day but nonetheless enjoyable as the brilliant weather stayed with us along the canal tow path back to Talybont-on-Usk where the warm conditions forced another pub stop at the Star Inn, from which and suitably refreshed we ambled the last short stretch back the hostel for showers, food and further re-hydration.

Sunday saw the same glorious weather continue and we set out as one group for the ride to the Gap but this year we threw in an extra loop that took us further south to Pontsticill Reservoir; coming off the Taff trail as it emerges from the forest overlooking Talybont reservoir the route continues to climb before heading out over moorland where the trail can be difficult to follow especially when the folks with the maps are at the back and Steve and James are breaking records at the front. The riding was along dry bridleway and although a bit strung out we arrived as a group at a point above Pontsticill where our GPS and maps showed a clearly defined bridleway but the real world didn't. There followed some pushing through that reedy, clumpy ground characteristic of wet but not boggy moorland and a bit of a slither and a slide down the bed of a small stream to the railway line that runs along the side of the reservoir; not quite the sweeping downhill we had been hoping for but nothing ventured nothing gained.

From the reservoir a short road section led to a point where we joined the route we had previously taken to the Gap where the long but manageable climb

north to the Gap starts, I say manageable, everywhere that is except for the gully that those who have ridden this way will be familiar with, it gets no less challenging both down and up. The path up to the Gap was busy with walkers on such a glorious day but nothing a cheery greeting couldn't fix, with your correspondents 'howdo' as I came up behind some walkers being recognised by a guy I'd been in spinning classes with in Romsey about four years ago...must be my Hampshire accent.

The run down from the Gap was as exhilarating as ever, with the top still rocky and tricky to negotiate but the drainage channels that run across the track now worn down a little and less of a hazard. A universal decision was taken to avoid 'boulder gully' at the bottom of the descent and to proceed by road and bridleway to Llanfryanch thence to Pencelli where another pub loomed conveniently out of the heat haze; one final leisurely ride along the canal bank and road to cross the dam at the foot of Talybont reservoir and another day of great riding in fabulous weather was complete.

Club trips to the Brecons have been unusual in that it hasn't rained (or very little) which given they are in Wales is a statistical fluke, however the weather on this ride surpassed even the previous trips; combined with the welcome at the hostel, the spectacular scenery and at times challenging terrain it made for one of the more memorable club rides.

Another Account of the Brecons Trip

By Sue Marsland

The annual Newforce May weekend away, for the second year running, had a good weather forecast, including for Wales (Brecon Beacons) where we were heading to.

Friday

A smaller group than normal due to a clash of events (See Robin's write up of Heaven of the south) headed up to Wales on the Friday, to either ride around Afan or Cwmcarn trail centres. I was part of the Cwmcarn gang. We all meet up at the trail centre cafe late morning and headed off to do the new Cafall route, no one noticing as we passed under the rather large Twrch (old route) sign and headed up a very scenic, hard climb to the top before heading down the single track, everyone was well up to the challenge. After another cup of tea and snack, four of us decided to have a go at the new Cafall route (well 2/3rds of it) another scenic route with late blue bells along the lower trail section, followed by heavily wooded sections. Cafall is definitely a harder route than Twrch with some tight corners with steep drops, steep downhill sections etc.

Late afternoon saw us heading off to the hostel just outside of Talybont on Usk. We then headed to a local pub for dinner, getting lost on the lovely walk down.

Saturday

Medium group 52 km (32 miles) 1190m

Fast group 58 km (36 mile) 1516m

The sun streaming in the window woke us up and we headed down for a rather good cooked breakfast. For the ride we split into two groups doing similar routes. The medium group headed off along Brecon canal and the faster lot headed over a rather muddy hill. We all met up near the top of our first joint hill and cycled together for a while, the route down was interesting, one of the longest, steepest (for some fastest) grassy downhill most of us would have done.

We then split up again as we headed along the side of a hill along tracks with some rather muddy ditch crossings, one of which Penni flopped sideways into ending up covered in mud. The next section was a stony rocky bridle path with stream crossings, one of which Derek took a heavy fall into. When we hit the road Derek decided to head back and those of us remaining started up the main climb of the day, walking more than we cycled as we climbed in the heat, the views to the Beacons were amazing. We got to the top and met up with the fast group who had missed out the rocky track coming up a different way via a pub! We then did a sneaky route along the top of the Mountain followed by a great long downhill – the highlight of the trip in my view. We re-joined the bridleway just as it turned into a footpath and had a longish walk down through some fields to the pub where we had a late lunch with a rather hot spiderman, batman etc..... (Stag do cycling as super heroes)

The route back was mainly road and canal towpath, another pub stop before the climb back to the hostel. Diner was taken in the hostel.

Sunday

39 km (25 miles) 910m

Another lovely sunny day, we all set off to do the Gap route (a path between two of the highest peaks in the Brecons) and stayed as one group. The first part was straight forward along tracks but as we headed into more remote areas the path became sheep tracks followed by a steep downhill to a lake then sections of road and track until we got to a picnic lunch stop at the Gap. From the Gap it was just about all downhill until the canal and what a downhill, rocky steps and steep loose slate at the top and then fast bone shaking downhill for a mile or so, then road and field crossing bridleways to the canal towpath and back to the hostel, via a pub for chips and the journey home. I had a great weekend as I believe did everyone else – thanks Ian for organising.



Footwear Review : Exustar SPD Sandals

By Nigel Aiken

Optional accessories : SPD cleats, sun cream, beard.

Sandal history stretches back in time for thousands of years but more recently, cycling compatible sandals with SPDs have become available . I should point out that my only connection to Exustar is as a customer and its worth noting that “alternative manufacturers sandal products are available”. Probably the most well known of which might be Shimano, makers of the popular fishing sandals, they also make sandals for cycling that are compatible with their SPD cycle shoe system.

In a direct head to head, Shimano v Exustar, I choose the later purely because the Exustar styling gives some toe coverage whereas the Shimanos had totally open toes. Although I envisaged using the sandals mainly for tarmac touring, where open toe air flow might be advantageous, I also thought that they might be useful off road, a scenario where protection from toe bashing rocks might be beneficial. There is also a Keen “Commuter” sandal which gives 100% toe coverage with an all round toe cap but also suffers from less Velcro.

Consultation with my cycling colleagues, the soothsayers of woe, suggested I should avoid the open sandal format altogether, as it was certain to lead to premature death by nettle stings or blood loss through contact with brambles or sharp rocks. Well, I’m still here a year later and inspection of the sandal toe areas show there isn’t a mark on them, which surprised me.

I bought the sandals online after finding a size guide and making some measurements. The Exustars seemed to be sized normally, whereas for Shimano footwear, I usually need a size bigger. There’s some latitude with sandals compared to shoes anyway, especially with the Velcro straps.

The range of sandal styles is limited and the available colours of the Exustar even more so with a choice between safe black or slightly exciting grey.

The Exustars have leather uppers with a neoprene lining and offer three Velcro straps for precise adjustment at the toes, middle bit and heel, to keep the fit snug. The Velcro can be backed off a couple of mm if need be to allow for the thickness of socks, allegedly, as it’s not something I’ve tried.

The soles feel solid and are stiff for power transfer, yet still bendy enough for walking around of an evening. As a weight comparison, my walking sandals weigh 600g for the pair, the Exustars are 1kg and my Shimano touring shoes are not much more at 1.1kg. The holes where the uppers should be don’t save a lot of weight ! The sole has a useable tread for walking with the usual trapdoor of rubber that can be thrown away to reveal the SPD cleat mounting plate [cleats not supplied, they normally come with the pedals to ensure compatibility].

The foot bed has knobbles reminiscent of soft Lego which maybe to massage the foot or to promote air flow / draining of rain water, who knows ? All parts of the sandal are easily accessible for cleaning.

In use, the biggest test my sandals have had to endure was the three days of the club trip to the Peak district in 2013, where they were worn all the time [The rain had stopped at the end of June and the trip was mainly sunny].



Newforce Brecon Beacons Weekend







Club Member's First Bikes



**Can you match
the bike to the
owner's story?**

**Sorry, no prizes
offered!**



My First Mountainbike

By Phil Hotston

How far back should we go with this Ed? OK to the beginning!

I recall reading an article a couple of years ago in these pages in which Pikey seemed to lay claim to some part in inventing DH racing. Well, at the same time, friends and I were making our first forays into XC riding. We adapted our own bikes into “Tracker Bikes”, basically an old road bike with the fattest tyres you could get to fit at the time, 1 and 3/8th inches as I recall; this was the cutting edge of Fatbikes at the time. We added wide cowhorn handlebars, purchased from Strides of Totton, and off we would ride on the rough ground and tracks that trailed around the edges of Calmore, Totton and Marchwood. Occasionally, we would venture further afield to the Forest Fire tracks of Deerleap and the sand-pits of Bolton’s Bench.

But, being road bikes, the frames suffered, and my older brother’s welding skills were called upon frequently for bodged repairs. And so, in search of the toughest frame available to us at the time, (forget the Raleigh Chopper – my Mk1 required more welding repairs than any road frame) my friend returned one day with a Pillar Box Red Royal Mail issue postman’s bike, the provenance of which is hazy to me now, but it didn’t come with a mailsack, so I guess it was OK.

Off came the front rack and the mudguards, on went the cowhorns, the fat tyres, and the piece de resistance, a sofa saddle retrieved from my mum’s dilapidated old Puch Maxi. In the days before fork suspension, this saddle offered 100 mms of travel all on its own. Finally, the bike came ready equipped with a three speed Sturmey Archer rear hub, mud-proofing years ahead of Rohloff and Alfine.

So in 1979, to a soundtrack supplied by Elvis Costello, Stiff Little Fingers and the Stranglers, I had my first short travel, XC mountain bike in Humbrol Black. I cannot remember clearly now why we painted over the shiny Pillar Box Red but there must have been a good reason!

By Peter Dobson

My first bike was a Trek 850, bought in 94. I had it four years, mainly as I was a student! Most moving parts got changed in that time, and suspension forks added, but incredibly it had the same bottom bracket which had to be heat-treated out before I eventually sold it...

My Marin Muirwoods 1996

By Patrick Summers

My first MTB was a Marin Muirwoods 96. A steel alloy fully rigid 21speed delight. I added bar ends for a bit of bling (never liked these, although they appear to be making a comeback on MTBs) and some 'rat traps'. I was delighted at the index shifting of the Shimano Rapidfire, and wondered at the marvels of technological advance on such a simple mechanical device as a bicycle. Alas, I still had cantilever rim brakes that clogged up in moderately muddy conditions. The lack of front suspension was very evident when descending the rocky track down to Ulwell on the Corfe Castle to Studland ridge – while my forearms were hammered, my mate with the new aluminium bike with front fork (ooh ahh), barely felt a thing! Cost £450 in 1996, and sold for £85 on eBay in 2012. The classic retro bike.

My First Mountain Bike

By Wendy Murdoch

Ridden like a true lady, (thank goodness for pants). Here is my first bike. Specification: (most likely) Toys'R' Us frame, Woolworths Wheel and Pedal Set. My bike accessories and clothing? Clarkes and 3rd time clothing hand –me- downs. I don't think that the school owned bike helmets, so my Mum thoughtfully shaped my hair as a helmet instead. Can't beat Mums.

My passion for Mountain Biking was evident early on in my life. This bike, although being in the pre-school equipment cupboard at school was infact MY BIKE. My first fight in life, I think my only proper fight actually, was with a girl who did not seem to realise in the same way that everyone else did that this was most certainly my bike. I fought hard.

As can be seen my cornering skills and technical ability were perfected early on in my childhood, hence my wonderfully perfectly honed technical skills today.

My First Off-Roader

By Keith Whitten

Back in the now rather distant days of my youth my friends and I decided one summer that it would be good fun to go and ride our bikes round the local woods. A mile or so from home there was a piece of woodland overlooking a sort of levelled area with a workshop in one corner where a few men spent their time maintaining construction equipment. There were a variety of trails running between the trees, including one wide and deeply rutted one that the workmen would occasionally race a pair of dumper trucks round. Not the tiny little chug-along building site dumpers but the great-big-articulated-in-the-middle ones that you still see at major road works today. The workmen didn't mind us being there and throughout the summer we'd go up and have races round various courses we'd nominate, wiggling in and out of the trees. We'd stop for the men's lunch hour when they brought the dumpers up and watch the spectacle of their racing. Once it proved to be very spectacular as the bucket from one of the dumpers dropped forwards whilst at full speed down the start/finish straight and dug into the ground causing the dumper to rear up and almost flip over. It was not long after that that the men offered to show us how to drive the dumpers. To a man (boy) we all declined.

It was 1978 (or thereabouts) and mountain bikes had yet to be invented so we used the bikes we had, all with skinny tyres, some with drop bars some with flats, most with Sturmey Archer three speed gears. Mine was a metallic red Puch Super Sprint that I'd spent most of my earnings from the previous year's summer job on. With five derailleur gears and flat bars it would now be called a hybrid but back then it was just a bike. It was a bike I was rather proud of so after a few trips to the woods I realised that if I wanted to keep it nice I ought to get a 'scrapper' for the off-roading. A local bike shop found me a frame and the rest of the bits to build it up were scrounged from various sources. The final touch was an evening spent the back garden of a friend who had also just finished his 'scrapper' decorating the bikes with whatever paint we'd found kicking about. I can't remember too much about the bike except that it was mostly red, with flat bars and had a pair of cyclo-cross tyres I'd actually bought. Up in the woods it 'did the job'. Happy days.

At weekends we sometimes ventured down into the yard below the woods, where the workshop was. To get there we'd drop down a steep ramp into the corner opposite the workshop which was quite a whizz. Getting back up was a challenge, particularly on muddy days, and seeing the dumpers roaring up there on full throttle was dead impressive. To the left of the ramp there was a large muddy puddle that was too deep to ever dry out and had a sheer wall where it butted up to the side of the pit. One day some bright spark had the idea that if

you charged full tilt at the ramp and veered off to the left you could do a sort of 'wall of death' round the puddle and drop down to head back towards the workshop. I wonder who that was? The wall was a bumpy enough to throw you about and kill your speed and all who tried it ended up with wet feet. Or worse. I had one last try, giving it my all across the yard, up the ramp and into the wall. Crash, crunch, clunk. I got wet feet again and when I looked at the bike the forks were sitting at a very strange angle, having all but snapped off at the bottom of the steerer tube. Game over. For now.

I needed some new forks and that caused me to have an ambitious idea. I'd make some in school metalwork lessons. Suspension forks. I'd only ever seen one bicycle with suspension forks, briefly so I modelled mine on motorbike forks. Various bits of steel tube, bar and plates were obtained and over a winter of cutting, turning and brazing in one hour a week practical lessons the forks were built. The bushings were brass pipe fittings modified on a lathe and the springs were valve springs from a car engine a friend of my Dad's had dismantled. They were heavy. So heavy that you could pick the bike up by the handlebars and it would nearly hang level. The nuts and bolts holding them together came loose so regularly that I took a spanner with me whenever I rode the bike. But they did have bounce. A bit pogo stick like as I had yet to learn about damping but there must have been a good 100mm of boing. And clang when they bottomed out on big hits.

The ultimate test was to go up to the woods and have another go at riding the wall round that puddle. I lined myself up, stomped on the pedals and went for it. With several large clangs from the forks.....I got round first time. No wet feet or mud soaked trousers to explain to Mum.

MY FIRST MOUNTAIN BIKE

By Roger Shephard

I was lying in hospital with electrodes attached to various parts of my upper body and my little daughter ran into the ward squealing with the delight of seeing her Daddy. I had suffered a bit of an episode of heart irregularities and the suspicion was that I had had a mild heart attack and I was a thirty seven year old wreck. I realised in that moment that if I wanted see my daughter grow into a woman, I would need to change my lifestyle of sex and drugs and rock 'n' roll.

When I was eventually discharged from hospital with firm instructions to consult closely with my doctor about how to improve my chances of living into old age, I took the decision to follow that advice and on the recommendation of my doctor, I took up jogging. I apologise to any enthusiastic runners in the Club but all it did for me was to shake my leg joints to pieces.

After a hasty re-consultation, my doctor declared that I should try body weight-supported exercise and in that regard his recommendation was to try swimming. I apologise to any enthusiastic swimmers in the Club but there is only so much tile counting that a sane man can take when doing interminable lengths of the swimming pool.

After a hasty re-consultation, my doctor suggested that my quest for an enjoyable weight supported exercise would be satisfied by cycling. I apologise to everybody in the Club, but that's how it all started. I salvaged my boyhood bike from the depths of my father's shed and re-furbished it, then having enjoyed riding it immensely, bought my first "starter" road bike and didn't look back. When my daughter reached mini-adulthood (ie bigger than a child, smaller than a "yoof") I bought her a look-alike mountain bike and seeing the smile it brought to her face, I gave it a thrash around the local woods. I was hooked so I needed to find one that fitted me. Even at that time, I knew that you only got what you paid for, and I couldn't afford a proper bike at new prices, so I looked through the small ads and eventually came across a Specialized Stumpjumper which all the magazines said was the bees-knees. It was priced at £250.00 secondhand and I had to have it; I parted with the cash and took it home with me, cleaned it up, changed the brake pads and tyres and I was in heaven. I loved that bike. It was fully rigid, front and back and it rode like a dream. It had bar ends, a 7 speed cassette and big chain rings pre-dating the compact drive. Remember, this was in the days when suspension was a pad of elastomer between the handle bars and the steerer tube and we called it a Flexstem. My Stumpy didn't have this technological bit of wizardry so any bumpy downhills taken with enthusiasm resulted in arms like Popeye, but man was it fun? It took me everywhere and even when I graduated to something more plush, by-passing front suspension forks and going straight to full suspension, I loved my first mountain bike so much that I couldn't bear to see it go, so it stayed with me in storage in my garage until quite recently when I simply needed the space and had to move it on. Even then it went to someone who was going to treat it as a complete bike and not a collection of metal bits for melting down. That bike certainly changed my lifestyle, but not completely; I've still got rock 'n' roll.

By Derek Johnson

The first mountain bike I bought was in 1985, and it was a Falcon Mountain Peak, which I still have 29 years later. It was initially stationed in Brighton and I used it for cycling along the mainly concrete under cliff paths at the top of the beach (probably my first exercise in ten years). It probably saw no mud at all until I brought it into the New Forest in the mid nineties, by which time it had been superceded by full suspension bikes. It's main use from then on was to be lent out to visiting friends, with whom it became a firm favourite, seemingly being relatively easy to pedal. I can't remember what it cost, and I don't think that it ever broke. Looking back it was one of my best buys, keeping my legs spinning until I found some more adventurous terrain and bikes with suspension. It still serves visitors well here on the Forest tracks where suspension is not needed.

My First MTB

By Nigel Aiken

The earth cooled, dinosaurs roamed, then in the mid 80s I moved down to Somerset. There was no underground and as a non driver, my transport was limited to the bus service. I soon thought of buying a good touring bike to enable me to explore and cycle to work. A friend had suggested that I check out the new mountain bike things that he had seen reviewed in a cycle mag. They were rugged, comfortable and had tyres well suited to the unlit, cratered surface, of the country lanes . If Richard Crane & brother could cycle up and down Kilimanjaro on mountain bikes, then mountain bikes were probably suitable for Somerset !

Duly impressed, I selected and purchased an MTB from the respected British cycle manufacturer Claud Butler (manufacture in this case indicates some hand brazing of tubes and assembly of components rather than just taking the bike out of a Taiwanese shipping container and putting it into a branded cardboard box somewhere in the vicinity of Nottingham).

The specification was awesome –

26" alloy wheels, 1" smaller than the standard 27" wheels for some reason

Knobbly tractor tyres.

Cotterless chainset

Reynolds 531 frame tubes for comfort (in case you forgot to fit the tyres perhaps ?)

15 speed gears with handlebar mounted, suntour micro ratchet thumb shifters.

Powerful canti lever brakes with dia-compe levers and on-the-fly adjustment.

Colour green, slightly sparkly.

Other brands of quality bike were also available – Muddy fox, Overburys of Bristol and even Rayleigh [before their upmarket bikes moved to the “special products division” and then disappeared].

In regards to the engine, I had been leisure swimming for a couple of years, doing a mile most days, so I had a good level of general fitness to tackle the counties steepest slopes.

I started cycling to work, mine was the only MTB in the rack or should I say the bike shed as of course my bike was propped against the wall; the racks were too narrow to accommodate my chunky wheels. On the lighter evenings & weekends I went exploring, on road and off... Bulbarrow hill, Cadbury castle, The Mendips, Ham hill, Penselwood , nine springs (later converted to a ski centre !) and even down to the coast.

I'd been down to the coast by bus, so I knew I could probably get there and back in a day even though I wasn't too sure of my mileage capability – I had yet to find a shop selling one of those ticky mechanical, wheel revolution counting mile-o-meters, that was calibrated for the 26" wheel size. The new electronic computerised speedometers were way above my pay grade, having an executive price tag as becomes something that technology had miniaturised down to the size of a can of sardines.

I bought toe clips and straps for the pedals, not only did they give more power going uphill but more importantly, they also kept my feet in place, firmly on the pedals when being shaken downhill over grass impressioned with cow hoof prints, rabbit holes and tractor ruts etc. I also seemed to get a lot more punctures then, which I didn't expect , as a tyre on the bike cost more than a tyre on my 1st car.

The Quantock hills were a regular treat, from the sticky hot summer days, with views over the Bristol channel to Wales and the ice cream van at dead woman's ditch, to the dampness of autumn with the primeval sound of stags baying in the mist. We didn't wear helmets in the early days but always managed to finish the

day in one piece, tired from the shaking we got from bumping downhill over the rock strewn paths, fingers cramped with a grip weakened from squeezing the brake levers all day. Only on very rare occasions would we come across other mountain bikers.

When NORBA organised the national championships in the Quantocks, entry was a must and after a 2 hour tour of the hills, our group managed to finish in the top twenty riders. The elite were of course all sponsored by bike shops and didn't have to worry about trashing their bikes !

The bike was also used for holidays, my longest tour was YHA-ing down to Lands end then up to Snowdonia and back. My elbows became painful on the last couple of days and I had to grip the bars from underneath to give them some rest from time to time.

Work arranged a challenge to do the BHF London to Brighton bike ride. Ditchling beacon was no problem for my lowest gear but it was quite challenging weaving through the mass of other cyclists pushing their 10 speed racing bikes up the hill. After the climb & an ice cream at the top, the decent on the other side was a freewheel all the way into Brighton. With a massive width of rubber on the road, brakes to compliment and no chance of meeting a tractor on a blind corner, I could sit back relax & enjoy the speed whilst the bike took care of the rest.

Towards the end of the 80's, I moved to Southampton and joined the CTC to get into the local cycling scene. Mine was, as ever, the only mountain bike in the club but some of the people with newer touring bikes had triple chain rings and a corresponding long arm derailleur; technology that was starting to trickle down from the MTB scene. The first ride I went on was to Chichester harbour. I was able to keep up with the touring bikes all day but when we got back to Southampton and split up to go our separate ways, everyone seemed to accelerate off into the distance, whereas I was glad for a chance to drop my pace and take it easy !

I didn't notice at the time but all this multipurpose cycling activity suggests that the bike design and frame angles were relaxed and inspired by tradition, nothing too racy or extreme. It did have the high bottom bracket and there was plenty of clearance from toe to front wheel. The only uprated/oversized component was perhaps the triangular centrepiece of the handle bars, which always attracted comments.

At Christmas I drove back up to Scotland, a couple of days after Lockerbie, with my bike in the back of the Astra. The weather was gloomy and wet and not much cycling happened. I returned via Newcastle, where I stopped off for a night out with friends. When I returned to the car the next day, its hatch window glass was smashed and the bike was gone.

In due course, a letter arrived from the Northumbrian constabulary. They had eventually recovered the bike (with slight modifications) and included some photos for me to positively ID so they could proceed with a prosecution.

By now this was a minor consideration as I was technically no longer the owner of the bike. My home contents policy had the "Bicycle" box ticked and the insurance company had generously paid out for an upgrade a replacement.

If there is one thing I might miss about the Claud Butler, it would be the friction gear shifters. They were precision embodied in a shifter. When indexing came on the scene, there was much debate as to whether it was really needed other than for high end racers or complete beginners. I'm probably too used to indexing now to ever go back but I do miss the feedback from the gear lever position against my hand which meant that I always knew which gear I was in without thinking, or looking at the cogs or a steamed up indicator dial.

Technology moved on and later bikes had various improvements – Sealed cartridge bottom brackets, more gears/ bigger range, V-brakes for more powerful braking without the cramped hands at the end of the day, suspension for improved braking and comfort, clip less pedals (no pins and needles from tight straps) and as the popularity of the 26" wheel standard has grown during the last quarter of a century, my mountain bike tyres have become considerably cheaper than the ones on my car !



Uptonogood?

By Robin Knight

I was! It was ace!

What are you on about, I hear you ask!

Uptonogood is a charity off road ride and village party, based in the village of Upton near Didcot. All profits go back into the village.

Think of the ride as a sportive, just about all off road, with various distances available. Forty-five miles, twenty five miles, twelve mile family ride and a five mile kiddies ride. Overnight camping was available for the nights before and after the ride for a few pounds too!

Myself, Ashley, Pikey and Allan signed up to the forty-five miler.

Three of us arrived Friday lunchtime to set up our caravan camp, and offer a 'hand' with anything the organisers needed doing. Allan had the right idea, he was unable to join the party then! The help we offered turned out to be a mammoth marquee building session! By the evening the camping area was quite busy, and lots of relaxed people were enjoying a night with friends. We enjoyed some good food, good music and a few ciders!

It had been hot and sunny for a while, and we were told the trails were dry and fast. But that was about to change. Around 11pm the heavens opened. Thunder, lightning and rain of biblical proportions. It went on into the early hours.

By the morning it had stopped, but it's legacy would be with us all through the ride.

Each ride started on mass, at different times throughout the morning, with our chosen ride starting at nine thirty. Allan had arrived nice and early with all the ingredients for a full English breakfast. Just what's needed before a long ride!

As people started to gather for the ride, we mounted our fatbikes (Pikey had borrowed Ashley's spare for the day!) to be met with the usual stares, comments and laughter! 9.30 came and we rolled out towards the Ridgeway. The ride would loop up and down it all day.

The beginning of the ride was a mixture of wide bridle paths with occasional road sections linking it all together. This helped spread the mass of riders nicely. After a few miles we joined a traffic jam of cyclists, and did the British thing – just waited!

A few minutes passed and we neared the front to find the issue. A short, steep drop to a narrow bridge. There were people and bikes clambering down all over the place! We took one look at it, and Ashley launched himself on his bike straight down, over the bridge and up a root covered climb the other side, quickly followed by rest of us! In the process we passed loads of people sliding down on their backsides and walking out the other side! It was all easily rideable on a fatbike!

The route took us up climbs onto the Ridgeway, and down fast, fun descents off it again. There was some mud. Actually, there was loads of mud! Really deep mud holes where the watery mud came over your wheels, slippery mud in gully's that made riding with 'normal' MTB tyres very difficult, ruts and root's to throw you off track.

The fatbikes coped well with all the conditions thrown at them. They collected a fair amount of chalky mud on the tyres, frames and gears at times but just kept going.

The forty mile route and the twenty five mile route were identical for the first twenty five miles, and the organisers had put in place a cut off time of three hours for those riding the longer route to pass close to the start before going on to complete the final fifteen miles.

As our ride progressed, we had been forced to stop a couple of times. Ashley had a couple of mechanical issues, firstly a sticky front brake, and then a puncture later on. The puncture happened on a narrow track, in hot sunshine with a fantastic view! Allan and Pikey were a couple of hundred yards further on at that point, so I stopped with Ashley. It was a welcome breather! We didn't rush. It was a fantastic spot!

After the long inner tube change we met Allan and Pikey chatting to one of the fabulous marshals. Time was getting on, and it was looking doubtful we would make the cut-off time at twenty five miles. As we were discussing our options, we stumbled across a pub! We stopped. We now had no chance of making the cut-off and completing the last fifteen miles!

Rolling back to base we all decided that given the conditions, and the lunch we had planned, it was a wise decision to 'just' do the twenty five mile route. On arrival back, we were met with a massive village party! A big BBQ, beer tent, ice cream van and several really good bands lined up!

There was no queue for the shower, so we were quickly cleaned, and lunch was served. In our normal way we enjoyed French bread, fabulous cheeses, a mixture of cured meats, pickles and cider!

We wandered over to the beer tent to try some local Upton cider and watch the bands perform. For a few hours we sat on straw bales, supping superb cider, listening to some fabulous music! The atmosphere was brilliant. A nice chilled out family afternoon. Early evening it all died down, and those camping the night went about cooking dinner and enjoying the evening with friends.

We had dinner and went to the local pub! A band was booked, followed by the first of England's world cup games. A fair number of riders and most of the organisers were there! We chatted, drank and for some silly reason danced till we could do no more of any of them! Uptonogood lived up to its name!

Sunday we had breakfast, packed up and went home.

1/7 Stanes

By martin Wheat

Away up in Galloway, just off the road to the ferry for Larne, lie several of the seven Stanes (7stanesmountainbiking.com). Blessed by a visit to relatives in the area, I took the chance of a couple of cold, showery, bright breezy afternoons at the end of March to try Kirroughtree. Before Easter the visitor centre opens only for long weekends, and I saw only 4 other riders in 2 visits there.

The trails run through forestry and include sections of access road but mostly are well stabilised singletrack free of muddy sumps to struggle through even at that time of year and without off-camber wet roots to catch the unwary. There are no big hills here, so they feel definitely cross-country rather than 'downhill', though that still leaves climbs you have to work at and nice swoopy twisty sections. Climbs through the trees are often switchbacks, and the locals are either very strong riders taking the short route straight up between the corners rather than around the bends, or developing lots of their own downhill sections that cross the climbs in places. I'm guessing the latter.

The principle challenges are rocky crests, some quite tough to rise over, and approached without sight of the exit. I suspect that to a skilful and committed rider there were no dangerous lines, but as I'm not I prefer to see what I'm in for.

There is a skills area and blue, red and black trails, with the black being an extension from the furthest point of the red – at separation the sign indicates one has ridden 2/3 of the red and 1/3 of the black. Coloured and numbered way markers kept me right once I had bought an up-to-date map. The blue includes quite long sections of access track. The black is more in the style of the red but adds "McMoab", an area of big granite slabs, for the early parts of which some trials skills would be handy. By that time I was tired and walked. The easier section pictured.

On an unfamiliar deserted trail where one feels a long way from anywhere, I rode the red too tentatively and was caught out by those crests, but learnt that on the right line there were no drops that would pitch me over the bars. Riding the second time around some of the sections was a blast, though I still didn't get it all right.

I think the lasting memory will be of those swoopy twisty bits, and that wonderful feeling as one cleans a section that caught you out the last time.

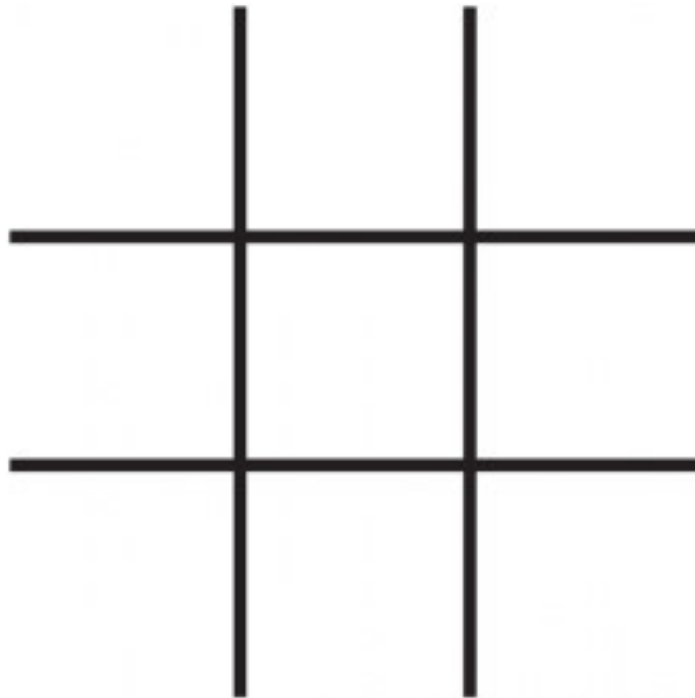
Kirroughtree is reputed to be the best of the 7 Stanes and it gave me good entertainment for 3 hours twice, and I'd be happy to visit again. In the unlikely event you happen to be passing, you should too.

Ed: Is this the start of a series from Martin? Can we expect reports on the other six Stanes over the coming year? A couple of Martin's pictures are at the top of the rear cover.

A Spare Page — The Editor's Dilemma

By The Editor

All contributions inserted, formatted and sized to start and end at the tops and bottoms of pages, (or thereabouts) and what's this? A single blank page. AAAAARRRRRRGH. If I want to lose it I will have to find three others to go with it but I can't do that because all the content already in place is far too precious. If this was a commercial publication I'd just sell a page of advertising space a bit cheap, but it's not and Robin's already told me he's having no trouble selling Big Bike Bash tickets so that's out. Maybe I could just type out whatever bike related rubbish first flows into my mind? No, you've probably all had by far enough of that over the last two issues. There's nothing for it but to give you something that will occupy you for far longer than reading my desperate rantings:



Reiki and Sports Performance

By Wendy Murdoch

Reiki works by encouraging your body's own healing system to heal itself. It does so by realigning the energy that your body is made up of (our bodies are all ultimately made up of energy) so that it can reach and/ or maintain its equilibrium.

Rarely is a person so 'well' and 'in balance' emotionally physically and psychologically that they are absent of energy 'blockages' or 'disruptions' within the body. (Note that emotional physical and psychological issues are never exclusive of each other. Psychological issues for example will also manifest in the physical body in some way). Most people seek Reiki due to an issue that they feel is very visibly adversely affecting them, in whichever aspect of themselves this may be. It can improve things greatly. Reiki is also often sought to be used as additional support during various treatments which can include for example chemotherapy treatment, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Therapy (I myself have applied it with great success in the latter to a friend). Sportsmen/ women (and mountain bikers!) can also benefit from Reiki in regards improving whatever problem it is that is affecting their sports performance.

So, what is Reiki? Reiki translated is Rei (Universal energy) Ki (transferring in the form of Qui). It is an energy that is present within all of the Universal Energy that exists. It was developed in 1922 by a Japanese Buddhist. It proved extremely successful and one of his first students was a Japanese Navy doctor who practiced it extensively and successfully for many years on the Japanese Navy whilst on the ships and on base, to improve and cure a huge range of illnesses and injuries. Sadly it was 'forced underground' by the Japanese government years later, which effectively meant that it was passed on and used within many Japanese families' within the home (as it proved to be so effective), but not spoken of outside of them. The Japanese people in some areas who practice Reiki, are recently now able to be more open about its use and are communicating its original teachings to others outside of Japan (one of these people is the founder of the Reiki that I practice, Jikiden). Fortunately, an American lady was also taught Reiki by the Naval doctor during a short time when he was studying in America, and was therefore also able to pass its teachings throughout the Western world in the interim.

What is a Reiki Treatment? The centre point of the palms is where the Reiki energy is concentrated most strongly. Therefore during a treatment I either use a 'hands on' or 'hands off' approach, or a combination of both, to concentrate the energy where I feel that it is most needed. Hands are positioned or placed according to where energy differences are felt via sensations in my hands but also where my well-tuned instincts in regards Reiki 'tell me' that I should position them. The person receiving the treatment is also encouraged of course to inform me where particular problem areas are. The time spent in each area may vary depending on what is found/ felt. The receiving person is treated whilst lying on a treatment couch wearing comfortable clothing with a blanket covering him/ her, or sitting in a chair if a couch is uncomfortable. It can last anything from 45 minutes – 1 ½ hours. Some relaxing music is usually playing in the background. It's a relaxed treatment and the person receiving directs it in terms of whether he/she

wishes to lie quietly and relax or to share thoughts of sensations that may occur during the treatment.

What Will I experience? I am often asked “what will I experience”?

The best answer to this is really to experience a treatment. The people that I have treated have had a wide range of experiences, some very subtle (i.e. “that it was relaxing” (the benefits of total relaxation in our busy modern world are extremely underestimated!) or have experienced much stronger effects.

How can Pro-active Reiki also help me in terms of my Sports Performance? In addition to being used reactively, Reiki can also be used proactively. There does not need to be a physical injury or ailment obviously present for Reiki to still be beneficial to sports performance. In the same way that sports hypnotherapy can enhance sports performance via the mind and weight training and yoga (using good form) can strengthen the body and help to prevent injury, regular Reiki treatments can help to promote the dispersion of energy blockages and the realignment of energy in the body to its most healthy state. This will help prevent tension being held within the physical AND mental aspects of the body. This is important because scientists have demonstrated that tension in the mind leads to the body’s DNA being held in states of constriction (this can occur anywhere within the body) which then affects the body as a whole. As blockages are released and energy is realigned, the mind (and therefore body) also moves further towards its highest functioning state; specifically therefore promoting success in the sports performance factors of speed, flexibility etc. whilst also helping to prevent injury.

Are all Reiki Treatments the Same as Yours? In a word, no. There are many similarities of course; however there are many different types of Reiki ‘out there’ which have developed over the years. I feel that this is mostly a good thing because it means that there is something for everyone (or most). If you are looking for a treatment, ask the practitioner what is involved in a session and you will know if it sounds right for you. Reiki can benefit anyone, but is not ‘for everyone’, as is the case for all complimentary therapies, but it might be for you.

Ed: My wife Annette had complimentary Reiki session as part of her ongoing cancer treatment and reported that it left her feeling genuinely relaxed.

Race Results

The Merida Summer Monkey Enduro on the 1st of June was attended by Daniel Whitten, Keith Whitten and Wendy Murdoch.

Daniel and Keith rode in the Fun category which was a one hour race and placed 5th and 1st respectively. Daniel unfortunately suffered a mechanical problem which cost him an estimated 15 to 20 minutes.

Wendy raced in the female 4 hour category and finished 4th with 4 laps completed.

The course was the usual Gorrick mix of woodland singletrack and wider trails to allow overtaking opportunities and in the summer conditions made for excellent riding.



Next Time in Newforce

It's a depressing thought but by the time I'll be putting the next issue together we'll be just a few weeks away from the clocks changing and evening rides being conducted totally in the dark. We'll also be wearing a lot more to ride in.

Between now and then we've got the best of the summer to get through so whatever you get up to (mostly bike wise) please take a little time to put a few words together to tell the rest of the club about it.

I'd also like to do a feature on what our club members get up to in addition to riding bikes. I know some of you are involved in other sports and pastimes so please tell us what you do and what you get out of them. Do they relate to riding bikes in any way or are they something completely different? All contributions will be wholehearted welcomed no matter how long or short.

Don't forget the regular slots, Reader's Bikes and the Event Calendar. All those who have contributed to this issue have done a very fine job indeed so please help keep the momentum.

**The deadline for contributions will be the end of
September.**

Reader's Bikes

A bike for the Alps by Derek Johnson

When I first went to the Alps in 2005 I took my 10 year old 1995 Gary Fisher full suspension bike and had a couple of falls as you might expect. The following 2 years I hired a Kona Dawg from the tour operator and I can only remember having one fall, or more correctly a slide. I therefore decided that it was the stability of the Kona Dawg bike that was keeping me upright and I duly bought my own Kona Dawg Deluxe (KDD) in 2009 which had 150mm of suspension travel. Right from the off with this new bike there was a problem with screeching brakes. Anyone who is familiar with prepared downhill runs knows that it is not the right MTB etiquette to brake hard for the bends as it ruins the track surface by creating braking bumps. So when my KDD developed this high pitch braking squeal it was a dead give away of my illicit braking. But after changing brake pads, brake rotors, and even brake calipers but to no avail, I finally decided it had to be an inherent design flaw of the frame. The rear caliper is not bolted to the frame but onto a separate bracket which is part of the rear suspension system (see photo). This gave me the required excuse in Autumn 2012 to buy a Turner 5 Spot frame on Ebay and have my KDD components (including brakes) transferred across. It's first trip to the Portes du Soleil was in the summer of 2013 and it appeared to perform very well indeed with little sign of the tell tale brake squeal on the prepared tracks. My only slight concern was hitting boulders with my pedal crank arms on the trip over from Chatel to Morgins. On my return to the UK I decided that the solution would be to change my 150mm travel forks from the KDD for a pair of 180mm ones that would raise the front end by 30mm to give me the extra ground clearance. A certain well known bike shop in Totton carried out the fork replacement and I think it was to Keith's amusement at the look of this modified bike that I was requested to write this article about it. Anyone else planning such a modification should note that the Fox Forx engineers try and mitigate the geometry change by setting the bottom end of the forks below the axle so that my expected 30mm uplift is probably nearer 20mm. And how does it perform you might ask?



Well, it went to the club weekend in the Brecons and took me down bumpy descents in great comfort and it was not too onerous to pedal uphill. The photos show the stem dropped for the Brecon climbs but it will be raised again for added confidence on steep descents. As for rock clearance for the pedal crank arms, I will have to wait for the Passportes du Soleil event in a few days time to find out.



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.

