

# NEWFORCE

Summer 2016 Issue 140







Above: Ashley and Robin saw some of the best of the spring weather on their Whitsun week holiday in the West Country

Below: The Vindys doing their thing at Uptonogood. In June!!!!



# **Editorial**

Welcome to the Summer 2016 issue of Newforce.

WAHAY, SUMMER'S HERE. Isn't it great? And this time there are no 'buts'. If you want butts go and turn on the TV or Youtube and look for music videos, you'll find plenty jiggling around there. The recent weather (at the time of writing) has had seen a mix of warm and sunny and cool and cloudy conditions and our own local area has remained largely dry dodging the thunderstorms and torrential downpours that have hit many other parts of the country. There was one Thursday Jalfrezi ride which went through the aftermath of a very localised downpour. A few miles either side of the route we rode that night the ground was bone dry yet the majority of the area we covered was wringing wet. The weather stats the following day listed Bournemouth as the wettest place in the country with 10mm of rain, all of which appeared to have fallen in the hour before our ride. It was at least dry from above while we were out and the only casualty was Eleanor's fluffy socks which will probably never again look quite so pink. Aside from that one anomaly the local trails have been dry, dusty and I for one have been taking every opportunity to go out and enjoy them.

Fingers now crossed that the summer continues to give such good riding conditions.

## **Some notes from the 14th June Committee meeting:**

Ashley Denham and Robin Knight have stepped down from the club committee due to their commitments to the Big Bike Bash. The club thanks them for all they have done for Newforce.

Caroline Clitter is currently in hospital suffering from Meningitis and is likely to be there for some time. The club agreed to give funds for a 'get well' present, which will be a portable DAB/FM radio, batteries and charger.

The club agreed to increase the annual donation to the Big Bike Bash from £250 to £400.

May 2017 will see the club celebrate it's 25th anniversary. Suggestions were invited from all members as to how we could best mark this occasion. If you have an idea for this please pass it on.

# **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	
Treasurer	Nigel Aiken naiken@theiet.org	
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	Ian Taylor John Hawkins Linda Hawkins Eleanor Rutter Dean Johnson Clive French	Steve Keith Malcolm (Max) Streeton Stu Rogers Karen Clark Nick Clark

Robin Knight -- stepped down as of June 2016  
Ashley Denham -- stepped down as of June 2016



## 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](http://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.



# Summer Rides List

**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 Wylde 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          Hatchet Pond near Beaulieu**  
**(ref SU 359 017)**

**Followed by a BBQ at Caroline's house, Norleywood near Lymington**  
**(directions given to attendees on the day)**

**NOTE: this ride was formerly billed as starting from Abbot's Well**

Many of you will know that Caroline Clitter recently suffered an attack of meningitis. She is currently residing in Southampton General Hospital where her husband George, who is well known to a lot of club members, was on one of his visits when I chanced to sit next to him in the restaurant there one day recently. In the course of conversation he kindly offered to host a garden BBQ at his house. The invitation was extended to all club members and I suspect that it will not only give George an opportunity to express his appreciation for the club's support of Caroline during this difficult time but will also give George himself a bit of an opportunity for some respite from the tough task that he is dealing with. For these reasons alone, I encourage you to show your support for Caroline and George by accepting his very generous offer and making this event something he can take strength from.

To enable us to take up the offer, we have re-arranged the ride venue for today, and instead of the original intention of starting at Abbots Well, we will meet at Hatchet Pond and ride around the parts of the forest accessible from that venue, so expect Beaulieu airfield, Diltons Farm, Royston Woods, Brockenhurst, Standing Hat and many more options where we would normally expect to ride when starting from Hatchet Pond.

Details of the catering arrangements for the BBQ itself are still being developed so [keep an eye on the forum where news will be posted as it becomes available.](#)

**Sunday 04 September 2016          Selbourne ½ 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.

**Sunday 18 September 2016**  
**(ref SZ 333 955)**

**Isle of Wight – all day from Lymington**

***Designated pub: Pub lunch on the ride followed by the Bar on the Ferry***

This will be a day ride starting from the Lymington ferry terminal and starting on the Island at Yarmouth and it will be a fun day out. Whatever happens, the choice of riding is excellent, the views from the ridges are stunning and the pubs are friendly and welcoming. Remember to bring loads of money for the ferry, the pub, and the catering facilities on the ferry and most importantly, a selection of coinage to feed the meter at the car park. **TIMINGS AND OTHER DETAILS TO BE ANNOUNCED**

**Sunday 02 October 2016**

**Abbotts Well**

**(ref SU 177 129)**

***Designated pub: the Foresters Arms is ¼mile along the road from the car park.***

Abbotts 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 Abbotts Well.



**Sunday 16 October 2016      Whiteways Lodge roundabout on A29 north west of Arundel (ref TQ001 108)**

***Designated pub: probably the café in the car park (there might be some big motorbikes to look at as well because it is a popular rendezvous for the Sunday morning biking fraternity– i.e. middle-aged men in leather, not Hell's Angels)***

This is at the top end of Fairmile Bottom where the road splits to either drop down Bury Hill heading north or down into Amberley heading north east. As such, it is on one of the node points of the SDW so you can expect grand views from the top of the ridges and swift descents followed by grinding back up again. It's chalk territory so a bit slippery in the wet, but superfast in the dry. Well worth a visit.

**Sunday 30 October 2016      Cranborne Garden Centre (ref SU 054 129)**

***Designated post-ride pub: the Garden Centre has a nice tea room but if it's a pub you want, there are a couple of good ones in the middle of the town just a few hundred yards away.***

The club has ridden from Cranborne quite a few times now and on the last two visits we used the Manor House car park when the Garden Centre accommodated us. However, the Garden Centre is under new ownership so we need to check if they will still accommodate us. If the answer is yes, then it's no problem, we just park as far up the end of the car park as we can to allow garden shoppers to park near the retail outlet. If the answer is no they will not have us, then we will find alternative parking and publish the details on the forum, so keep your eyes open for confirmation of yes, it's the garden centre or no, it's off-site somewhere close.

If they don't do this again, then we'll sort out some alternative parking on the day. There are some good hills and interesting tracks in all directions out of Cranborne so an interesting ride is assured.

# The Quantocks : A photo Story

By Keith Whitten



Despite the Love Shack having been a favourite Vindy destination for several years the third weekend in April was my first visit there. It's actually a Scout hut available for hire and most visiting Scout and Guide groups have left souvenirs of their visits on the ceiling.







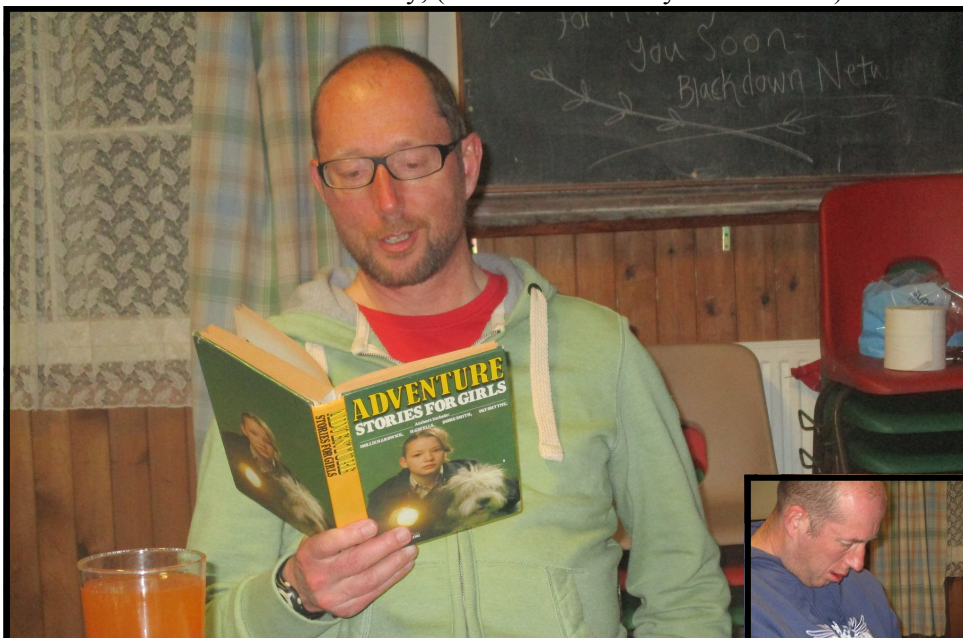
The sun shone pretty much all weekend and at times we actually rode our bikes.







Robin and Mike seemed to be getting on very well and in the evening after a big meal Allan read us a bedtime story, (inset: not that everyone needed it).





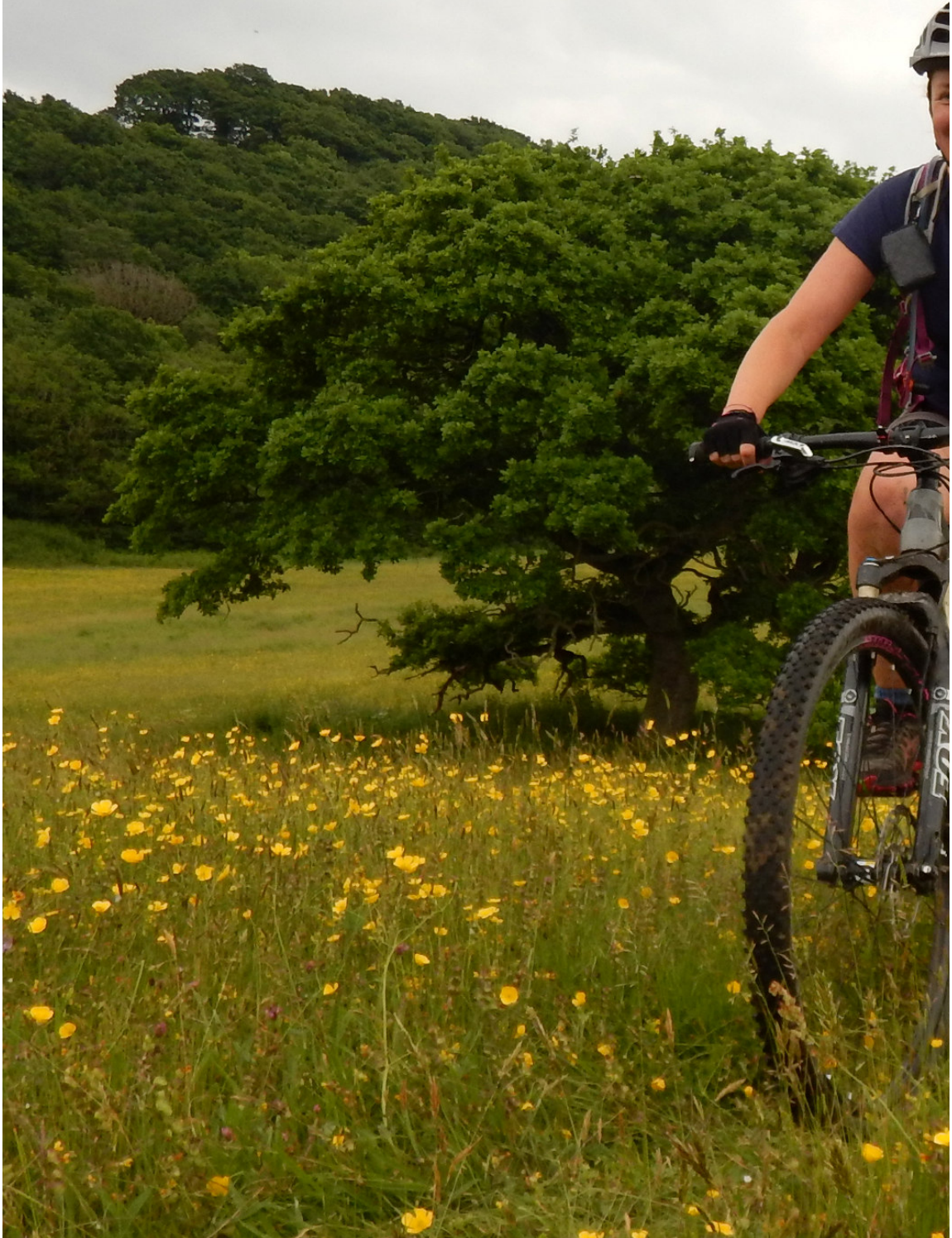


On the Sunday morning Ashley led us up a VERY steep trail and at the top we found some local wildlife. The real highlights were the descents, which were a lot of fun. Too much fun for any of us to stop and take pictures though. All told, a top weekend of great riding and company, I'm sure I'll go again.





One of many happy, smiley faces  
at the Long Mynd Weekend







# Pass'Portes Du Soleil 2016

By Keith Whitten

Spring in the Alps this year appears to have been a bit of a cool and damp one, however when I turned up for my fourth time at the Pass'Portes the weather was glorious. 30 degrees and sunny. This meant that any of the exposed trails were dry and in fine condition while those in the woods were a little slower drying and a bit sticky in places.



For those who don't know, the Pass'Portes is a non-competitive 80km 'Grand Randonnee' in the Morzine, Chatel, Champéry ski areas of the Alps, run over the Friday, Saturday and Sunday after midsummer. Most but not all the climbing is taken care of by the ski lifts. Your entry includes your lift pass, access to food and entertainment en-route and a 'free' gift, which this year was a nice little back-pack.

The group I went with all arrived on the Wednesday night and by late morning on Thursday we'd purchased lift passes and were up on the trails getting back used to Alpine riding. There are plenty of man made trails cut into the hillsides with steep, tight berms being the prevalent feature. Being early in the season some were freshly constructed and some of the existing trails had received a little maintenance before the lifts opened. Others had not and given the changeable nature of Alpine weather and the relative softness of the soil the trails are cut into, braking bumps can appear quite quickly and become very large. Add in the steepness and resultant speed and it can be a rattly ride. Good suspension is a must.

Friday was the day we'd all entered and once again the sun shone albeit with a slightly less hot feel to the air. There were eleven of us riding together and before long it proved rather unwieldy and progress was slow, so at the first food stop I announced that I was really quite keen to complete the route so rather than stop then I'd press on on my own. Well, it's proved to be the British way of doing things, hasn't it? I did bump into the group later on and rejoined them to repeat a couple of the more fun bits before leaving again to ride a section I knew they weren't very keen to include. I completed the 80km, with a few extra runs down some good bits thrown in, comfortably before the lifts closed but a little too late to join the rest of the gang for a post ride beer. Never mind, there was plenty later when we all got together for a barbecue.

Friday night was when the weather changed. The barbecue was interrupted by a thunder storm and there were more torrential downpours through the night. The result on Saturday was that the whole area was very wet. The trails there are not built like British trail centre trails where a base of crushed stone makes them all weather rideable and resistant to wear. With two thousand plus riders out for the day the alps trails became slippery, sloppy and very badly rutted. Riding speeds dropped and many peoples brakes wore very quickly. For Saturday we'd split into groups of those wanting to take their big downhill bikes out to the gnarly stuff and those of a more timid nature, myself included, intending to enjoy the easier trails.

It didn't take long for those groups to fragment, split apart by some being unprepared for the much poorer weather and others just losing each other on the relatively crowded slopes. I ended up on my own again and spent a rather miserable hour in the Morzine town square covered in mud and sheltering from the worst of the rain under a marquee, unwilling to ride 5 miles back to the house we were staying in because I couldn't be sure there'd be anyone to let me in. I did ride again when the rain stopped and managed to find some trails off the official route that hadn't been too badly affected. The way back to Morzine *was* on the official route though and the rain had restarted so by the time I got back I was absolutely plastered in mud despite having mudguards front and rear.



Sunday, the rain had stopped and four of us rode again in the morning before our mid-afternoon departure for home. The ground conditions weren't a lot better but it was our last chance so we made the effort. Down one trail, newly built for this year, the mud was so deep and sticky we had to get off and drag the bikes



*downhill*. Maybe we shouldn't have ignored the 'Trail Closed' sign at the top.

The previously mentioned cool spring meant that there was a lot more unmelted snow than I've seen in previous years and on the Thursday and Friday it was quite a novel experience to be riding through snow fields in summer kit.



# Keith Harris

By James Davenport

I joined Newforce over a decade ago. As with any new sports club it took a few months to get to know people. One of the personalities who was mentioned frequently was some guy who runs 50 miles “for enjoyment”. As my interest in mountain biking grew to include 24 hour mountain bike racing, night rides and other slightly off-beat interests my paths with Keith became more common.

Keith had an unassuming job of a computer programmer which is the same as my background. Software development can be fulfilling in terms of work though outside of work there is more to life. It is this side of life that Keith embraced and immersed himself in and was a passion for him.

Keith loved the outdoors be that cycling, running, picnics with the family, proposing to his then fiancée whilst on “holiday” running a week of back to back marathons in the Himalayas. Keith took the ordinary and made it extraordinary. Keith created an adventure out of day-to-day life.

One example of this was entering the Stathpuffer 24 hour mountain bike race up in Scotland. We entered as a 4 man team. This event is located just north of Inverness in late January with only 7 hours of daylight for that time the year. For preparation we decided to spend the day after New Year’s Day cycling the South Downs Way, with a bivy spot (wild camping) overnight, to acclimatise ourselves to the cold. Keith loved his gadgets as was especially proud of his homemade tarp made out of cuben fibre that his grandma stitched for him and probably weighed less than a box of matches. The fact that it only just covered his head is probably why it weighed so little.

Four weeks later we were driving in a borrowed transit van heading north to Scotland.

Most of the Scottish Highlands were closed due to extreme snow and ice. Our route was thankfully clear. We arrived late and found ourselves at night looking at a forest logging road, lots of snow and thinking where do we pitch the tents? Keith took one look and said right park the van there, get the shovels out and let dig ourselves a pitch. If there was a problem Keith would offer a practical solution, almost immediately, in a most unflappable manner. I would say this impressed me most about Keith.

Most people would view a problem with panic or concern. Keith would view the same problem as an opportunity for ingenuity and innovation. For example to save spending a small fortune in buying studded ice tyres Keith simply put some rivets into an old set of tyres. Temperatures averaged around minus ten degrees centigrade with constant snow or sleet. I almost developed hypothermia changing a tyre and had to abandon one of my laps to get straight into my

sleeping bag on my return to the van. Keith developed a puncture on one of his later laps and ran 6 of the 8 miles on foot with a lap time not much slower than mine on the bike! We finished half way down the results list but the results were secondary to simply competing in such a challenging event.

Keith also participated in other events such as the Three Peaks Yacht Race. This involved running up Snowdon, Scafell Pike and Ben Nevis whilst travelling by a sailing yacht up the west coast of Britain. Boats were not allowed to travel under motorised power. If the wind dropped you had the choice of waiting for wind or rowing. Keith had entered the event several times. Not satisfied with rowing Keith designed and built a rig that held two old bicycles welded to a frame that was fixed to the rear of the hull and powered a propeller.

Perhaps the best example of Keith being able to create an adventure out of everyday life was to have a BBQ in the New Forest overnight. Whilst this would normally be an “ordinary” proposition. Having a BBQ in the New Forest, whilst wild camping overnight, in February with extreme weather warnings of hurricane force winds and flooding is perhaps not the most sensible of options. After frequenting one or two pub stops we rendezvoused with Keith’s clandestine BBQ drop in the woods. We rigged up a tarp to shelter for the BBQ. At 2am in the morning with strong gale force winds we managed to have our BBQ! Keith made an normally bonkers idea seem utterly normal.



Keith developed Leukaemia around 2 years ago. I last saw Keith only a couple of months after he had been diagnosed with Leukaemia. He was in good spirits and explained that the doctor said that if you were to have Leukaemia this is the one to have as it is treatable

and the most “mild”. Again Keith was unflappable regarding the situation and looked to the future with optimism. Keith would reject any form of sympathy or pity. For some this could be confused with putting on a brave face in the face of a potentially terminal condition. For people who knew Keith this was simply a practical view of his condition and a sign of the strength of character as an individual.

Keith’s condition deteriorated over the next two years. Involving multiple induced comas to allow his body to fight infection and secondary conditions to Leukaemia. The Leukaemia developed into a more a cruel and more virulent form that would claim his life on the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2016. Keith fought the Leukaemia to the end.

Keith was married to George and had a young son, Oliver. Keith moved to Bartley in the New Forest and renovated a cottage whilst his wife was pregnant with Oliver and transformed an old property into a home for his young family. Including a “climbing frame” for his son. The climbing wall was full blown climbing wall with hand holds, slide and platform to act as a tree house. The structure is a sight to behold and certainly not your average climbing frame.

Keith loved his family and they were his world. However Keith’s strength and sense of adventure and not giving up will be treasured and remembered by all. Especially by his family.

To you Keith, I hope you rest in peace, and thank you for the gift of learning how to create an extraordinary adventure out of the ordinary.

Right then who’s up for a bivy ride!





# 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.

## **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 or attend please contact Robin Knight.

## **September 2nd to 4th**

Singlespeed UK. Mere Vale, North Warwickshire.

This year's event is hosted by the Godiva Trailriders and despite their assurances that it will be crap there will most likely be guided rides, a race which a few might take seriously, live music and plenty of beer. Maybe they'll even feed us at some point, apparently one of their mums does a mean egg and cress sarnie.

## **January 2017**

Entries Open for Uptonogood, which will take place in late June.

This event is billed as a celebration of mountain biking and has a variety of signposted rides through the North Wessex Downs followed by a party with beer, cider and live music.

## **Spring 2017**

SSEC2017 will be held in Scotland.

We don't know exactly where or when yet but if the organisers can do anywhere near as good a job as the Slovenians did it'll be one not to miss. You won't even need a real singlespeed. Bikes can be converted for the weekend or just bodged with gaffer tape. That's how it was in Slovenia.

# SingleSpeed European Championships 2016

By Keith Whitten

SSEC 2016 was held on Saturday 21st May in **Slovenia**, a country I knew absolutely nothing about and would have struggled to place on a map six months prior to the event. Satisfying a little idle curiosity I found it was just to the right of Italy and just above Croatia, part of what used to be Yugoslavia. Regular posts from the organisers on the 'One Cog Cycling' Facebook page were making the venue at Kobarid look like a pretty nice place to visit so I spent a little more time on the internet and found reasonably priced flights into Ljubljana, the Slovenian capital and out of Trieste in Italy. Both airports about 60 miles from the venue and the majority of the final leg being gently downhill. What a perfect plan.

I flew out on the Thursday on an afternoon flight and landed to the grey, damp aftermath of a very wet day. Thankfully the rain had stopped and after unpacking my bike I set off on the first half of my ride to Kobarid. The first ten or so miles were through relatively flat agricultural countryside with regular small villages and the first thing that struck me about my surroundings was how clean and fresh everything looked. Most of the houses looked like they could have been built or at least painted only yesterday and no rubbish anywhere. A good start. After a while the road started twisting it's way through some very serious looking hills. I'd done my research and knew the route would involve a long gradual climb to the highest point where I'd booked into a guest house for the night. And that's just how it was. My off-road singlespeed gearing was just right for steadily rolling along and I hardly noticed the height I was gaining. I got to the guest house as the light was fading and it really was at the highest point on the road. Just 30 metres away was a large wooden arch announcing that fact, the other side of which the road went downhill very steeply. It turned out I was the only person staying that night so I had the place to myself after my host Rudy, cooked me a very nice meal. In the morning he did me a big bacony omelette and with that powering me I was on my way.

The first few miles were very steep and I was very glad I didn't have to ride up them on the way back. There was no need to hurry and in the early afternoon I arrived in Kobarid. There were plenty of singlespeeders milling around and it didn't take long to collect my entry pack and find the campsite where I'd booked a bed in the hostel.

Later in the afternoon I'd booked myself on the Cheese, History and Beer tour. Cheese production is one of the larger industries in the area and the guided tour included the opportunity to sample many of the local varieties. The town's history museum told the story of the role the valley played in World War One

and then it was on to a local bar for local beer in the warm sunshine. What more could you ask for. Food possibly? Well, that came later back at the campsite, with plenty for everyone and another beer included. For the remainder of the evening we were treated to the sounds of a big (possibly Austrian bloke) playing the accordion and singing along, wandering from table to table taking requests. I managed to capture a few seconds video of his rendition of Deep Purple's 'Smoke On The Water'. The evening was also an opportunity for folks who only ever meet each other at these sort of events to renew acquaintances strike up new friendships. An early night it wasn't.

Saturday morning was race day and in more bright sunshine all the riders rode the mile to the town square for the race briefing. As well as speeches from the organisers a local junior dance troupe had been booked to entertain and give the willing amongst us a warm up by joining in. A good many riders were in fancy dress which made the whole gathering an impressive spectacle. From there it was back to the campsite for the race start. In usual singlespeed style everyone parked their bikes and then walked off to the official start, somewhere out of sight whilst the organisers and a small army of helpers moved and mixed them all up.

GO.

We went, found our bikes and got on with riding. The course was a good ride with some nice technical trails, some not so nice sticky, muddy bits courtesy of the previous week's rain and some downright horrible steep, stony, slippery climbs. Those on fatbikes and plus size tyres seemed to be doing best on the steep bits. Both up and down. With my nearly plus sized wheels I felt I was doing alright. It was officially three lap race but after the second lap where I'd manage to stay feet up on all the technical trails, rocky step downs, narrow rooty bits and more, I decided I'd done enough and gratefully accepted my finisher's beer. I'd had a particularly satisfying moment on the final descent where I'd found the easier line on a hairpin bend blocked by a pair of stalled and struggling riders and passed them by dropping down the rocky inside. That deserved celebration.

The overall winner was to be decided later in the afternoon by the first four riders going head to head in a competition involving beer and slaloming through cones on the camp's football field. Along with a British couple I'd been chatting to I didn't fancy hanging about to watch that and as the afternoon was heating up went off in search of a river swimming spot we'd been told about.

We found it, we swam and cooled off and then warmed up again in the strong sunshine. After a bit we headed back and as we neared the camp met another fifty or so riders going in the opposite direction. So we turned round and joined them and went for another swim and splash.

There was a full programme for the evening. Food, prize-giving, and a couple of bands. Oh, and plenty of beer too. Crowd surfing from the stage was actively encouraged by the second band and during their final song they got as many as would fit up on the stage, a lorry trailer, to line up, dive off and be borne away by the crowd below. Yes, I was one of those. Whilst waiting my turn the trailer was rocking, the speakers were swaying, some guy in front of me lost his footing and nearly flattened the drummer. All this under starry skies with the still snow topped mountains to the north just visible in the moonlight.

Sunday morning was an altogether slower affair. There was a relaxed breakfast at a town square café, another ride to the swim spot and in the afternoon a few of us went white water rafting with a local company. The day concluded with a group meal with friends, new and old and on Monday it was time to start the journey home. Five hours riding at a relaxed pace got me to Trieste airport and we boarded the plane just as a torrential thunderstorm hit. Crossing into northern Italy the surroundings looked nowhere near as well kept as back in Slovenia but it was a pleasant ride nonetheless, finishing with a pizza in a village café close to the airport.

There have been many, many photos from the weekend posted on the singlespeed sections of the internet and what strikes me most is how much of the area I *didn't* see. It's a beautiful and very friendly part of the world and I fully intend to go back there as soon as I can. The organisers put on a truly fantastic event for us and are hoping to secure the right to host the world championships in 2018. I hope they get it.

A few snippets that didn't make it into the above account:

English appears to be the unofficial second language of the country with many people there speaking enough to make good conversation.

At the swimming spot I was told by a local that there is already quite a lot of English ownership of holiday homes in the area.

In the early hours of Saturday morning I was woken by the thump of the guy in the bunk next to me rolling off his own bed and landing on the floor. Turns out he's one of the organisers of SSUK later this year.

If you want to see more of what you missed the organisers have put a couple of official videos on Facebook and Youtube: Sorry the links are a bit long winded but they're worth it. You might even spot me in a few places.

<https://www.facebook.com/1474462249449497/videos/1783934971835555/>

<https://www.facebook.com/1474462249449497/videos/1784324271796625/>

<https://youtu.be/fpUenET15TA>

And finally. At the end of the prize-giving organiser Danjiel proposed live on stage to his co-organiser and girlfriend Ursula. Her reaction: "No, no, he's joking"! Oops. He insisted he wasn't and she did finally say "yes", looking a little stunned.



Above: Race briefing

Below: The backdrop to the weekend





# Long Mynd trip (“Faster”Group)

By Clive French

Riders in this group: Steve K, Steve S, Bruce, Jerry, Eleanor, Tania, Clive, Paul

After meeting up at Bridges YHA, an hour of eating and faffing later and we were off for Day 1 of the annual club weekend away. We could have hoped for better weather, but at least it wasn't raining. Much. Yet.

For this afternoon's outing, we were doing a circuit to the famous Minton Batch run – a one-and-a-half mile fun singletrack descent following the stream of the same name.

Starting off from the hostel was a “gentle” road climb up through a farm and onto Long Mynd itself. Sheep territory. At the top of Long Mynd is a huge grassy plain with tracks leading in all directions. All uphill to Pole Bank, at 516 metres altitude, a good 250 metre ascent from the hostel. Here we found a very helpful orientation table showing the way to all the exciting things we might have been able to see on a sunny day.

Off Poles Bank and along the Portway – a road (boo!) but with a wide grassy verge with lumps just made for jumping over (yay!). Away from the tarmac and off down the Minton Batch trail. It was huge fun even though I took it fairly gently: Jerry almost doubling my average speed on that section.

A bit of road again through the pretty villages of Minton and Little Stretton, leading us up into Hopes Wood. A few nice singletracky bits into Church Stretton then one challenging narrow gravelly climb up on to Long Mynd again. A few more grassy tracks and back down to the hostel.

This hostel was well kitted out with bike storage and washing facilities, large kitchen and lounge. Plenty of space for tea and cake. And indeed, plenty of tea and cake there was.

Just for a change we went to the pub, for a very pleasant meal and a jar of ale. Or two. ish.

Day Two started with a round of hearty hostel breakfasts, and we were off in the opposite direction to Stiperstones. Another steady climb up to 500 metres was rewarded with a set of fun tracks and occasional spectacular views. A highlight of this route was taking in several of the MTB trails in Eastridge Woods. A



rather fiddly zigzag ascent raised us to the top of the woods, giving plenty of downhill fun and a tumble or two.

Lunch was at the Stables Inn at Hopesgate. A friendly dog seemed to occupy most of the garden, and the weather had cleared by now. It was a good plan to book in advance. I don't think there would have been much chance getting lunch if we'd turned up unannounced.

Over Stapeley Hill, over Corndon Hill for a spectacular view which really took us by surprise. Winding up a gravelly climb, turn a corner and suddenly you're a hundred metres up, with a sharp drop to the valley below. A flower meadow added some colour to proceedings and a long road up-and-over took us to a welcome tea-and-cake stop at Bog. Here we met Steve Mann hobbling back to the hostel "single-speed". As always, after the cafe stop is a hill climb. Up the road for the last climb of the day. At the top we paused to review the route of the "Batch Burner" MTB event that had been running that day. A nice, loong downhill back to the hostel, for washing, faffing and a memorable round of drinks.

Day Three, and breakfast was unusually bewildering, at least for those preparing it. Back to the Long Mynd for another go at teh Mynton Batch trail. A bit muddier this time, due to rain and the passage of the Batch Burner event riders, but still a good laugh. More fun through Hopes Wood, then up Carding Mill Valley. And Up. And UP.

At this time, the group split, half opting for another loop of fun around Long Mynd, half opting for a warm dry pub, before heading home after another well organised and memorable trip.

Thanks to the organisers, and to Paul for guiding and local knowledge.

## **££ 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**

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### **Primera**

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### **Bicycle Barn**

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### **Perfect Balance Cycles**

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### **Hargroves Cycles**

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### **Peter Hansford Cycles**

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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**

### **Mike Tomlinson's Cotic**

Here's another example of the recent explosion in wheel and tyre sizes available to us off-roadie folks. Mike's Cotic was designed to be fitted with either regular 29 inch wheels or 650B+. After not feeling the love for a Fatbike Mike sold it and built this bike in the 650B+ option with a pair of 2.75 inch WTB tyres on 35mm wide WTB rims on Hope Pro 4 hubs. The transmission is Shimano XT 1x11 speed, driven by RaceFace Turbine cranks. The fork is an X-Fusion Slide 29 and the brakes are Shimano SLX. Finishing kit includes Thompson seatpost, Charge saddle and Ritchey stem and carbon bars.



**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.**

