

Newforce 162

Autumn 2022



Welcome to Newforce 162, the autumn 2022 edition. And autumn it most certainly is as I write this.

Since the above picture was taken in October the heavens have opened. Regularly. But it has only rarely been at all cold. This morning (8th November) I was in the garden in a tee-shirt trimming a hedge in between showers and looked up to see a rather large bumblebee going about his business. I don't remember that happening very often at this time of year.

In the last issue I announced that I would be stepping down at the end of this year and invited offers to take my place in producing this newsletter. To date there have been none and if you read the committee meeting minutes below you will see that there was some discussion as to the relevance of the club website now that Facebook appears to have become the prime means of communication between members. So this issue could well be the last. What do you think? If you still think it has value then please speak up. The annual calendar which also serves as a club handbook will continue for the foreseeable future.

NewForce Committee Ordinary Meeting Minutes

Tuesday 11th October 2022 at 8.00 pm

1. Attendees and Apologies

Attendees – Martin Wheat, Clive French, Michael Buckfield, Karen Clark

Apologies received from – Keith Whitten, Roger Shephard, Susan Marsland, Eleanor Rutter, Jack Lawry, Nick Clark, Stuart Rogers, Steve Keith, Malcolm Streeton, John & Linda Hawkins.

2. Previous Minutes

There were no issues arising from the previous minutes.

3. Rides and Riding

Clarity around the ride schedule was given as one ride in the forest, one out and one day ride.

Forthcoming rides were agreed as follows:

16 October	Abbotstone Down
30 October	Wootton Bridge
13 November	Danebury
27 November	Abbotswell
11 December	James Hill and Christmas lunch at The Swan, Lyndhurst
26 December	South Car Park Winchester P&R
8 January 2022	Swinley Forest

22 January	Standing Hat, Brockenhurst
5 February	Ringwood Forest, Three Legged Cross
19 February	Four Marks
5 March	Hatchett Pond
19 March	Breamore
2 April	Marlborough full day

Karen agreed to lead the slower ride at Wootton Bridge on 30 October.

A list of leaders will be submitted to British Cycling. Michael will contact leaders beforehand to check that they are happy to be on the insurance list, as follows:

Medium group – Penni Harrison, Nigel Aiken, Roger Shephard, Nick Clark, Carolyn England (Swinley), Michael Buckfield and Susan Marsland.

Fast group – Tania Pendergast, Stephen Keith and Paul Croll.

Night riders – Richard Hawkings, Clive French, Patrick Summers, Rob Perry and Andy Pell.

5. Membership report

Martin Wheat advised that the current membership stands at 92 members.

Thanks was given to Michael Buckfield for taking on the role of secretary. Official confirmation of the role to be made at the AGM.

6. Web Site and Facebook

There were discussions around the possibility of more weight being given to Facebook (FB). Many clubs operate on FB alone. It was agreed that a proposal would be made for this to be discussed at the AGM and members consulted beforehand.

If the idea is adopted there would need to be tighter controls over FB and the website would be dropped. There are currently 374 followers on the Newforce FB page.

The main financial outgoings for the club are: insurance, web hosting, calendar, membership cards and postage. If the FB idea was to be agreed, there would only be insurance costs which would mean a nominal membership fee.

7. Any other business

It was mentioned that photographs are on Flickr. The website hosting cost is £200 for the current year.

Susan had asked about somebody taking on the role of adding rides to Facebook. She also proposed ride starts as Stanstead and Halton Forest; these are to be considered when the next rides list is arranged. She also suggested another summer BBQ which will be taken forward to the AGM.

Clive asked about voting for Cycling UK and there was a decision not to participate.

8. Date of next meeting

It was proposed that the next committee meeting and AGM will be on Tuesday 7 February at 8pm, as attendance on 14 February is likely to be very low.

Devon, Coast to Coast

By Keith Whitten

To be honest this doesn't really involve much in the way of mountain biking but it was such a good ride that I feel justified in filling some space here with a few words and pictures.

The ride was done as a prelude to my attendance at this year's Armchair Adventure Festival down in Plymouth, a small but perfectly formed little event where you can hear tales of travel in places near and far by all means of transport and good advice on how to do it yourself too. Oh and the food, drink and music in the evenings weren't too shabby either.

The official coast to coast route (Sustrans route 27) runs from Ilfracombe seafront to Plymouth Hoe but for reasons of convenience I chose to join it at Braunton. On the Tuesday afternoon I took the train from Romsey to Barnstaple and rode the few miles to Braunton where I found a campsite and later on the rather awesome Squires fish and chip restaurant. In between and unencumbered by luggage I took the bike for a little explore through the expanse of sand dunes that is Braunton Burrows. In addition to a great big beach there was also some fun singletrack but that was about as mountain bikey as this trip got.



Wednesday morning was the start of the trip proper and commenced with the scenic road route through the Burrows and the Tarka trail back to Barnstaple. The C2C follows the Tarka Trail along both sides of the Taw estuary and in the September sun the views were stunning and rolling along past them in no particular hurry felt like the best thing in the world.



Obviously it couldn't go on like that for ever and at the Torridge estuary the trail turned inland. The expanses of sand flats were replaced by woods and farm land but every few miles, just as I was thinking I'd seen enough trees for now, there were bridges and viaducts with big views out over the valleys they crossed, and sometimes just unexpected arty stuff at the trailside. Cafes en-route were plentiful too and I can't vouch for them all but the one I stopped at had very good food at a reasonable price.



Towards the end of the day I reached Okehampton. Up to that point the bulk of the route had been disused railway paths and the only noticeable climb had been on the country lane out of Hatherleigh. The campsite I was aiming for was a couple of miles to the south of the town but the climb to get there was a real biggie, long and steep. The campsite was nice but there wasn't a lot of choice for an evening meal if you hadn't brought your own; a pub a couple of miles away with reviews that suggested it was fine for those with small appetites and fat wallets or the A30 services 15 minutes walk. The services won and as I ate my burger at the side of the petrol station I was treated to a glorious sunset.



Thursday morning was once again clear and crisp, with a heavy dew so as with the previous day the tent had to be packed up wet. From the campsite the route followed the western edge of Dartmoor with more upping and downing than the previous day into Tavistock where it rejoined the disused railway line for a gradual climb to Yelverton. Yelverton was worth a stop and brief look round before the gradual descent down to Plymouth where the heavy traffic and crowded nature of the city were a huge contrast to the previous couple of days. After the obligatory touching of the lighthouse at the route's end I had a couple of hours for a bite to eat and explore of the waterfront before catching the Cremyll Ferry across the Sound to the Mount Edgecumbe estate and the festival, which proved to be every bit as good as last year's.



As a post script to this tale, after the festival I decided to ride to Exeter to catch the train home. This could be done by following the Sustrans route 2 which is intended to eventually run along the entire south coast of England but is still a work in progress. Unfortunately east of Plymouth the signage still leaves a bit to be desired and I struggled to follow the official route. The bits I did find were nowhere near as inspiring as the coast to coast route but I was however lucky enough to meet and ride alongside a couple of local older gents who had some great tales to tell and local knowledge to share. The first was recently retired and had spent the summer riding the entire coast of mainland Britain, while his wife sailed it. Each night they'd meet at a harbour and sleep together on the boat. Before we parted he recommended I divert from the Google maps route I was now following and head up the Teign Valley where I'd be in for a more gentle climb and better views. It was at the start of this diversion that I met the second gent who looked to be well into his eighties and was keeping a healthy pace up the valley. Whilst riding and

chatting he mentioned a couple of recently departed friends, one of whom had been a tail-gunner in a Lancaster bomber during the second world war, one of the rare ones that survived!

