

NEWFORCE

Autumn 2017 Issue 145





Editorial

By Keith Whitten

Welcome to the autumn issue of Newforce. It's been a busy summer for club members and several of them have very kindly written plenty to fill the following pages.

Personally I've been busy too with lots of people wanting their bikes fixed at my shop. That means long days, staying late and getting home feeling pretty knackered. But Thursday nights are sacrosanct and I've managed to get out on pretty much all of them to a Jalfrezi or Vindaloo ride. At the start of many of those rides my legs have been feeling dead and the thoughts running through my head have often been along the lines of 'let's not do too hard a ride this time'. But then somewhere between the start and the final roll in to whichever pub we're visiting I start feeling brighter, the pedals turn easier and my thoughts change to 'why not just one more little loop before we stop, just a few more miles'. Maybe it's my own love of riding bikes over rough ground or maybe it's the joy of knowing I'm sharing the evening with a likeminded group of friends but after thirteen years of going out riding bikes on Thursday nights I still never quite feel ready to stop and if there's something else interesting or important happening on a Thursday evening it's a major wrench to do it instead of riding. Thankfully the autumn usually sees my workload reduced at the shop. I could do with a rest and I'm looking forward to hitting the trails with my legs feeling as enthusiastic as my mind. That'll be handy with the ground now getting wetter and heavier going.

Rest? I'm not too sure that's going to happen very much this autumn. As you will read further on in the issue I've taken on another job - organising the 2018 Singlespeed UK Championships. So I now have three jobs; Event Organiser, Magazine Editor and Bike Shop Owner. Well I'm glad one of them is paid.

The next issue will be a calendar again so please have a look through all the photos you've taken this year and send me the best ones as soon as you can. Or maybe load them up to the Newforce Flickr account. That's been looking a little bare this year.

Anyway, enough of my ramblings. Have a good autumn and ride your bikes lots.

Photos:

Cover: Steve Samways and Doctor Susi on Exmoor.

Opposite top: At the far end of Great Ridge Wood on the Wilton ride we found this memorial to the 7 crewmembers of a prototype airliner which crashed here in 1963.

Opposite bottom: The Unicorn, the organiser's baton for Singlespeed UK.

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	Allan Knight allan@newforce.org.uk	
Membership Secretary	Martin Wheat membership@newforce.org.uk	
Treasurer	Nigel Aiken naiken@theiet.org	
Ride Leader	Susan Marsland susanm@newforce.org.uk	
Newsletter Editor	Keith Whitten keith@newforce.org.uk	
Website Editor	James Davenport jamesd@newforce.org.uk	
Other Committee Members	Ian Taylor John Hawkins Linda Hawkins Eleanor Rutter Dean Johnson Clive French Sue Marsland Steve Samways	Steve Keith Malcolm (Max) Streeton Stu Rogers Karen Clark Nick Clark Mike Tomlinson

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	£17.00	2 years	£32.00	5 years	£75.00
Family	1 year	£25.00	2 years	£45.00	5 years	£100.00

Riding With Us

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

Cycle helmets are compulsory on all club rides.

Please dress appropriately for the likely weather conditions.

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

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

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

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

Our Organised Sunday Rides

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

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

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

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

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

The Club Newsletter

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

The Evening Ride Groups

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

Vindaloo.

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

Madras.

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

Jalfrezi.

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

Tikka Masala

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

Korma.

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

Autumn and Winter Rides List

Ride notes provided by Roger Shephard

Sunday 15 October 2017 **Cheriton, The Flowerpots pub** (ref SU 582 283)

Designated pub: The Flowerpots pub

We have ridden from here a few times now. We usually make use of the field at the back of the pub for parking on the basis that we will spend lots of money at the bar upon our return. There is limited availability of Sunday Lunches (with a need to book beforehand) but bar snacks are readily available. We could head north towards New Alresford and pick up on the Oxdrove network of tracks or we could stay southwards and take in parts of the South Downs Way and the tracks around Brockwood Park and Bramdean.

Sunday 29 October 2017 **Fritham** (ref SU 230 140)

Designated pub: The Royal Oak

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

Sunday 12 November 2017 **Swinley Forest ½ day ride** (ref SU 877 661)

Designated pub: cake and coffee at the Visitor Centre

Swinley Forest is an area of Windsor Forest located between Bracknell and Bagshot to the west of the A322. Cycling is permitted on hard tracks and within a specific expert mountain bike area. It is a condition of cycling within Swinley Forest that you must hold a cycle permit if over 16 years of age and we must comply with the requirements of English Nature. The forest is open 24 hours a day 7 days a week with access available from a number of entrances. The car park is at The Look Out Discovery Centre which not only is the source of Day Permit purchase, but has toilets and cafe is open every day except Christmas and

Boxing Day from 10am to 5pm. Whilst the Swinley Forest Map showing the boundaries of the areas available to ride is available to purchase from the Visitor Centre if you are not familiar with the land but whenever we ride there, we make our own way around usually guided expertly by Carolyn. There forest cycling provision has had a bit of a revamp since we last visited as a club so we will all be learning as we go.

Sunday 26 November 2017 Watership Down from Whitchurch (town centre at ref SU 463 481)

Designated post-ride pub: somewhere in Whitchurch.

There are a couple of public car parks within 100m of the grid reference being the mini-roundabout in the centre. If you are coming in northwards off the A34 there is one car park next to the Silk Mill approx 75m before the roundabout in the centre and if that is full there is another car park approx 75m along the C class road named Bell Street that is the 2nd exit off that central roundabout. There are some significant hills to be conquered in this area and we could ride along the crest of Watership Down above Kingsclere as the probable farthest point north of the ride. If that doesn't take your fancy, there is still good riding to be had closer to Whitchurch itself to the north west of the town in the St Mary Bourne area.

Sunday 10 December 2017 James Hill car park, followed by Christmas lunch at the New Forest Inn Christmas ride and lunch (ref SU 283 083)

Designated pub: The New Forest Inn, Emery Down – Christmas lunch. (Pub @ SU286 084)

The best start point is the car park just 1/4 mile along the road from the pub in the direction of the Portuguese Fireplace. It has worked alright for us each time we have ridden from here because parking is at a premium at the pub. We simply leave the cars where they are and walk along the road. Starting from here we have a choice of the Reptilliary, Rhinefield, Bolderwood, Burley, Minstead and so on; all good stuff and just right for working up an appetite.

Please note that if you have previously taken advantage of parking roadside on the verge, you are now denied that opportunity because a series of protection stakes have been set along the road edge to prevent people clogging up the road and causing a hazard. The choice is now either the pub car park or the official forest gravel car parks.

Tuesday 26 December 2017 Beaulieu Road Station (ref SU 349 063)

Designated pub: Drift Inn

This is the annual “Boxing Day ride” to ride off the turkey and it is definitely not designed to be a test of stamina or speed, just a chance to shake off the excesses of the festive season. Obvious choices are Denny Wood, and the triangle between Lyndhurst, Brockenhurst and Beaulieu. Less obvious choices are back towards Longdown, Deerleap or down towards Dibden Purlieu.

And afterwards, a warming visit to the Drift Inn directly opposite the car park for a fireside drink and chat; always a good social occasion with a higher number of members staying for the post-ride function than we would normally see.

**Sunday 07 January 2018 Garnier Road Park & Ride,
Winchester (ref SU 487 281)**

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

We have ridden from here a few times as a starting point for Boxing Day ride but of course that time slot is at the Drift this season (see previous entry). It can be a bit cold at this time of year, so be sure to arrive prepared for a Spartan experience and kitted out in appropriate clothing.

There are a number of options from this starting point but it is possible to ride southwards along the Itchen Navigation where it passes St Catherine’s Hill before turning eastwards up Plague Pits Valley, then onwards along the Dongas tracks for Hazeley Down, Morestead, and Cheesefoot Head and the South Downs Way, Milbury’s Inn and the general area near Cheriton. Or, we could choose to take the other direction, up Compton Down, around the fringes of Flowerdown, West Wood Farley and other points of note.

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

**Sunday 21 January 2018 Burley (opposite cricket pitch)
(ref SU 214 028)**

Designated pub: Queen's Head in the centre of the village or the White Buck close to the golf course

We are designating this a "Beginner's Ride" which will be suitable for people still in their mountain biking early days. There will of course be energetic options on offer as well as the gentler version.

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.

Sunday 04 February 2018 Bishops Waltham (ref SU 554 176)

Designated pub: Probably one of the delightful coffee (and cake) venues in the town centre

The car park is the one on the left side just as the through-road on the one way system leaves the main cluster of shops heading out towards Corhampton. For those of you with long memories, it is where Dukes Mill used to be, but the car park name escapes me right now.

With a start in the centre of Bishops Waltham, we could choose a route that leads up towards the top of Beacon Hill near Exton before turning north west and heading for Lane End at which point we could turn north east for a loop around Cheriton and Tichborne depending on weather and timings. Then it's back via Cheesefoot Head, Old Down, Baybridge House and Bigpath Farm before topping Stephens Castle Down and dropping once more to the valley floor and back to Bishops Waltham.

Singlespeed UK 2017 (and 2018)

By Keith Whitten

This year's Singlespeed UK championships were held in the hills above the village of Stavely in the Lake District. It was billed by the organiser Rich, as a 'back to basics' event and on that score it certainly didn't disappoint. The campsite was a field by a river and facilities were limited to a marquee, a pizza van and a handful of portapottys. If you wanted to wash, well that's what the river's for!

The drive up was quite an ordeal. It was the last Friday of the school holidays and the roads were well and truly clogged. Everywhere. The satnav said five hours but in the end it took us nine and after dropping Annette, my wife, off at a friend's house a few miles from the venue I eventually arrived a little after midnight. To make matters worse the bar wouldn't be open until the following evening and I'd neglected to bring any beer of my own. As usual at these events there were still plenty of people still up around the campfire to welcome me and after catching up with a number of folks I hadn't seen since the Euros in May it was eventually bedtime.

The main event on the Saturday was to be a ride out into the hills, a hill-climb competition and then a race round a couple of loops of trails high up in the hills. The ride out was the longest anyone could remember for one of these events at about nine miles, thankfully punctuated with a couple of refreshment stops (beer out of the back of the organiser's van) and blessed with untypically for the Lake District, clear skies and warm sunshine.

The course for the race was lumpy, and just a little bit boggy in a few places. How come it stays so wet up in the hills? Doesn't gravity work on water up there? Due to the slightly complicated layout (a lap and a half then turn off for a descent to the finish and campsite, sorry field) almost everyone completed the full distance which is highly unusual and can only be explained by that being the only way they'd find their way back to their tents and vehicles. There was another refreshment stop, a whiskey stop and encouragement from both a Bavarian Serving Wench and a miss Whiplash. Apparently a small portion of our entry fees ended up in the Ann Summers tills. I'm not going to complain. At some point someone won and eventually we all got back to base safe and sound.

In the evening there was food, prizes, beer and an acoustic duo, both on guitars, playing requests. They were very good, keeping us singing and jumping around until well after midnight. Oh, and at some point I was caught singing along to Lynyrd Skynyrd's Free Bird. I was handed the microphone and the band started the song again. I knew maybe half the words.



The following morning was a slow affair for many but by lunchtime most had said their goodbyes and then it was over until next year.

So, where's it going to be in 2018? During the prize giving offers were invited for someone to run the 2018 event and when I put my hand up to offer to host it on the Isle of Wight no-one contested it. I now have another job to do. So far I've found a campsite, a nice lady from the council has agreed to let us race on the beach and I have a whole host of other ideas to make it a memorable weekend. I've had many offers of help so far but if you're reading this and would like to be a part of it please let me know.



ArdRock Enduro Mountain Bike Festival; Can you do it next year?

By Ros Harper

This event is so popular you need to set your alarm for 6am on a dark morning in October to get online and book your place for the following August. After a few minutes all the hundreds of places are gone and you are straight onto Facebook to see which friends have got in; these will be your buddies for a very hard day of gravity enduro riding 9 months later.

It's a long way up to North Yorkshire, so it's worth trying to fit in some cross country trails while you're up there. I rode the man made red/black at Dalby Forest and a natural MBR loop at Rosedale on the way up, both lovely in their way but not really a preparation for the tough stuff to come.

Arriving Friday in Reeth, Swaledale at the Dales Bike Centre you will find the whole valley full of campers and bikers, families and dogs, drinkers spilling out of the one pub, folks queuing for fast food and coffee and wandering around the retail stalls. Live music is blasting out from the stage and the atmosphere is friendly, but also just a bit tense; everyone is thinking about the race next day! There is no signal so make sure to have a plan for meeting friends before you arrive. Get your bike checked out for free by one of the big name bike manufacturers; they are incredibly helpful and generous with spare parts, but don't leave it to the last minute as there will be a queue. If you are a serious competitor with a Saturday entry, you can practice on the course on Friday, Stage 1 will give you a good feel for what you're in for. Those entered in the 'just want to get round' sport event on the Sunday can spend the Saturday spectating and can ride a short practice loop well away from the real thing.

The course on both days is a very demanding 45km loop with 6 Alpine style downhill stages on natural rock-strewn terrain; all rollable but if you are riding Saturday you are riding it blind so each twisting drop to the next shute is an adrenaline fuelled joy ride requiring everything your brain and body ever learnt about mountain biking. The 6 stages are timed using an electronic transponder on your wrist and you start each stage when you're ready, so you can play chase with your friends or give each other space if you prefer. The helpful marshals on the course will shout encouraging words as you pass; take their advice on line choice and if they are yelling "PEDAL!", get on it or you will regret it when a steep rise rears up around the next corner. Half way round the loop will be a water stop high on the wild moors, with free energy bars and

jelly beans to boost you into the final flowy sections, but be sure to take your own supplies too and eat/drink every 45 minutes or so.

Finishing uninjured with a respectable time is the best feeling in the world and probably the best chance of avoiding disasters is to be fit, stay relaxed, prepare your bike well with decent tyres and match your speed to your skill.

If you are wondering how technical the stages are, you should know that I was told they are loads harder than the black runs at Bike Park Wales; as I have never dared do the blacks I can't confirm that, but somehow on the day, momentum and courage will carry you down the mountain, so I would say give it a go, just keep it rolling and you'll survive and have an experience of a lifetime.







Wrestling with a Gorilla

By Martin Wheat

My wife told me we should extend the summer a bit by visiting Provence in September, so here we are. I have a bike with me – well you do, don't you; it's handy for nipping up to the Boulangerie for the morning croissants and it's a reasonable alternative occupation to visiting another market.

The place we're staying looks Southwards over a wide valley mostly filled with oak and olive trees, lavender fields and vineyards – delightful. Beyond it is the “Giant of Provence”, the Mont Ventoux apparently in quite easy reach so it'd be rude not to pay it my respects with a visit and I've picked a warm afternoon with wall-to-wall blue sky and negligible wind – it's not called Ventoux for nothing and why would you choose a time when it's blowing a hoolie?

Well, it may appear quite close but my preferred start point at Malaucène is 15 miles away and a good bit higher than here, so I get a lift there (sometimes I think she does understand me). Even then, there's an 8-mile warm-up ride over a small col to reach Bédouin which is the start point for the ascents during Tours de France, though they may have done up to 200km before they reach it and that's no part of my plan.

From there, you just ride up. There are no relieving descents; only a little slackening of the gradient from time to time, but that is such a relief! That's the gorilla bit. They say riding up a mountain is like wrestling with a gorilla because you stop not when you feel tired, but when the gorilla fancies a break. The gorilla won easily. The summit took me well over two hours, and included several stops just to let the pain subside a bit. It's well under half an hour down the other side back to Malaucène, which seems a shame really.

Ventoux has a big history, so it attracts all sorts: there are signs telling motorists, motorcyclists and cyclists all to “share the road”. Coming the opposite way was a rally of vintage cars on its way from Dieppe to Cannes. I saw no overheated engines, but they're heavy old things so I suspect the greater challenge is to avoid overheating the brakes on the way down.

Of course, there are bigger challenges than riding up that hill. Towards the top a rider struggled past me at one of my stops and I thought his laboured progress rather belied the “Great Britain” across his shorts. Talking at the top, it transpired that this was his third (and last) ascent of the day in pursuit of qualification for the “Nutters' Club” (<http://www.clubcinglesventoux.org> (137 km and 4400 m– Up and down, by bicycle, in the same day from three main asphalted roads.)). Wow!

That, and the challenge of making it up the hill to the Boulangerie tomorrow morning.

Her version

English summers. I'm never ready for the end of "summer" at the beginning of September so I bullied 'him indoors' to take a few days in the sunshine. Last year we planned Provence where he could cycle and I would take my paints and credit card to keep myself amused while he was out of the way - so then in March he falls off his blasted bike and six months later he still can't drive, let alone ride a bike. Clown. So Ventoux is beckoning from the end of the garden, so we have to walk up across its scree in a howling cold gale. Even the French complained that it was terrible, but maybe that's not too surprising.

This year we're in Provence again with the paints (and the bike). Well. He'd cobbled together a mountain bike frame with, he says, road wheels and 2x9 transmission from the used MTB parts bin, but decided that he needed lower gears to get up Ventoux. Well, I ask you - what a wimp! So we spend a day visiting every bike shop within a thirty mile radius, and they all said "Non". He then decides he'll ride back from the last one so I drive back to base and pour a glass of wine.

Our host is a cyclist and was kind enough to invite him for a spin with his group who were preparing for a local sportive - La Drômoise. Despite his two chain-rings it seems he wasn't left behind but it took lots of fluid and a hefty casserole afterwards restored spirits and legs.

After another ride (=peaceful afternoon for me) he says his legs might be strong enough to have a go at Mt. Ventoux. "I'd like a lift to Malaucène and then I'll ride to Bédouin, over the hill and back to base via Malaucène ... ". hmmm.

I'd seen enough of that village and its bike shops, despite its fantastic double line of plane trees along the approach road, and no, I do not want to revisit the summit - I had to spend a whole day sitting on the scree there years ago, from 7am waiting for the Tour to reach us: no shade, no loo and no trees to hide behind. How about cheering him on from the roadside? No thanks: done that before.

So I deposit him at Malaucène and on the way back called into a local pottery, resist the temptation to buy a huge terracotta urn, and content myself with a couple of gift items, then spend the afternoon capturing the colours of autumn vine leaves in water colours. I feed him a large bean and sausage casserole for supper which seemed to be welcome, but he's not interested in chatting much.

Each to their own, but I hope he'll still be picking up the croissants for breakfast tomorrow morning.



Above: Martin Wheat at the summit of Mont Ventoux

Editors note:

Four years ago I also rode up Mont Ventoux and like Martin found a day when it wasn't living up to its reputation for high winds at the summit. I also started from Malaucene but rode in the opposite direction, heading straight up the mountain. The climb from Malaucene is less tight and twisty than the Bedoin side but no less steep. It's where Guy Martin hit nearly 90mph in an unpowered go-kart. The descent on either route can take you out of your comfort zone very quickly. As soon as you start heading down hill you're accelerating at a far greater rate than anywhere I can think of locally and definitely for longer. Your speed just keeps rising until you bottle it and pull on the brakes. I've spent plenty of time riding motorbikes at higher speeds but 40mph plus on 23mm tyres with caliper brakes still takes a bit of getting used to. Chapeau to the Tour racers for riding competitively on those roads.

Finally, for anyone thinking they'd like to try the climb themselves, you don't need to go to the trouble of getting your own bike down there with you. In Malaucene I passed a number of shops offering good quality road bikes for hire.

Newforce Exmoor Weekend Trip

September 8th, 9th & 10th 2017

By Steve Samways

So the date was set and the hostel at Exford was booked for 2 nights. Only a small group of 10 made the weekend due to lots of other events and trips going on at this busy time of year.

Friday started with a visit to the Quantock Hills for a ride around the Classic Singletrack route, thanks to the directions from a useful mtb book. The weather forecast wasn't good but we were optimistic and 6 of us met up and enjoyed a nice sunny ride with some great views.

With the directions from the book and my enthusiasm to lead from the front we managed to find our way around most of the route, with a little help from Sue's Garmin. Near the end of the route we were expecting to descend towards the car park but the valley in front of us became very steep. We all know that feeling and were thinking - if we go down there and it's wrong nobody is going to be pleased that we have to walk all the way back up! Fortunately the helpful Garmin told us the cars were in fact just in front on the other side of the big hill. Going back the way we came was not an option so up we went while walking and pushing/carrying the bikes. Thankfully the car park was at the top and my map reading skills were hopefully forgiven.

It was a short drive from the Quantocks to the hostel at Exford and we booked into 3 separate private rooms. It was a good hostel with spacious communal areas. Tea and cake followed as is the tradition before the evening visit to The White Horse, a short walk across the road. A few late arrivals came in after the evening meal including our hardy adventurer Susi, who was happy to pitch her tent in the garden.

With much laughter from one particular bedroom it sounded a bit like a school boy's first trip away!

Breakfast was also served in The White Horse and it was good to sit together on one large table.

Saturday's ride was planned to be all day with the weather forecast good for the morning and possible rain in the afternoon. Off we set with 6 riders for the medium group and 4 in the more enthusiastic group. I was leading the medium group with the help of instructions for a circular ride from Exford to Winsford. It

was mostly okay with only a few errors due to vague instructions and lots of track choices.

The climbs were steep and steady as expected with lovely cross country riding and fast descents.

Nice team work got us through a series of gates without too much stopping as we dropped into Winsford.

The sun was out and as a tea room was spotted it seemed a shame not to stop for refreshments. Tea and a few chocolates were consumed, and our team photographer Susi snapped a few artistic shots of muddy bottoms! Out of Winsford we climbed steadily towards the edge of the punchbowl with amazing views across Exmoor. From great tracks to soggy marshland and with no obvious route we finally emerged onto a tarmac road towards Withypool. By now we were ready for the lunch stop but not before one fast tarmac descent including a brake check for Gary with an oncoming car! (must be more cautious).

The Royal Oak pub and a chance to meet up with the other group for lunch was welcome. Entering this pub was like stepping back in time with the dark bar area and a Landlord who it seemed wasn't keen on muddy dripping customers! Sitting outside with sunshine on our backs the food was surprisingly good – great riding in a beautiful scenery with nice people - what more could we want?

With food eaten and heavy rain starting it was tempting to stay next to the open fire in the pub for the afternoon!

More puddles, more mud, more gates and with the weather worsening we were still trying to follow map instructions. Thunder and lightning added to the drama and as the rain was heavy we sheltered under a tree. Probably not the safest option with metal bikes and lightning overhead.

A few fields and tracks later it seemed the weather gods were determined to punish us and it was time to call on the positive energy of the group as we stood in a rather deep mixture of mud and cow dung trying to decide if the soggy field going downhill was the one we wanted. We successfully pushed on through but eventually decided to cut short our adventure and head back to the hostel for the Newforce tradition of tea and cake/biscuits.

The drying room was well used that night - I certainly hope the smell in there has died down by now!

Showered and warmed we headed over to The White Horse for our evening meal - nice food and a few beers and ciders were consumed.

Back at the hostel later that evening we made use of the lounge area for more chatter and tea, coffee and cake eating. Time for bed for those tired legs but still the banter went on probably best not to find out what was said after lights out in the 4 bed room. I heard people comment they even had aching jaws from so much chatting and laughter.

Sunday morning started dry but rain was forecast later so after another filling breakfast it was on with the soggy riding shoes from the smelly drying room and any dry clothes left for a half day ride before heading home. This time we headed north up to Dunkery Beacon, the highest point in Exmoor. It was a little windy but it was worth the effort as we were rewarded with superb views. This was followed by a great rocky twisty descent where you really had to pick your line and control your speed. The rocks were testing everyone at various times and Alan D's approach did make me smile as he would curse and encourage them to get out of his way, with a few expletives for his bike as well. Sorry Alan at least when you're being verbal I know you're still okay!

We had a quick stop for a Freddo chocolate bar and worked out a route back. This was a lovely single-track climb up again with great views and a short section of road on the descent where unfortunately Alan D had a sideways slip and hard landing hurting his upper arm.

As the rain was starting and we didn't want Alan riding and risking any further damage to his arm it was decided to get back to Exford on the most direct route by road. We left Alan with our number 1 medic Susi to start walking and set off to collect a vehicle to recover Alan and Susi. We all wish Alan a speedy recovering I'm sure he'll be back on great form soon.

With everyone back at the hostel the rain was now set in for the afternoon and it was time to pack the bikes away and remove yet more muddy and soggy riding gear.

Another weekend was done and everyone seemed to enjoy it regardless of the weather and my suspect map reading at times. Thank you from me to all who came and helped make it another enjoyable Newforce weekend

Hopefully another adventure will be planned here for May 2018 - look out for info on the forum.

Lakeland Rambles

By Phil Hotston

A late summer trip to the Lakes? What a nice idea...except that by the time we arrived on the 2nd weekend in September Autumn had got there ahead of us.

We stayed at Ambleside Youth Hostel with its jawdropping shoreside setting and views across Lake Windermere to the Langdale Fells beyond.

Driving up on Thursday evening allowed us to rise early on Friday morning, breakfast and hit the trails by 8.30. Rain was forecast later and we wanted to make the most of the trip. Cycle paths and bridle ways lead around the head of the Lake to Wray Castle and onto Claife Heights. The sun shone down and a wrong turn taking us along the picturesque lakeside path was a blessing not to be cursed, even though we were required to rectify our mistake with a push up a some rocky steps later. Across the top of the ridge, the surface water lay deep and wide and we were quickly soaked from beneath. Down a fast rocky, slippery bridleway to Near Sawrey, past Hill Top, once home to Beatrix Potter, then on and up to Grizedale Forest where we sampled the first section of North Face trails before stopping at the visitor centre for coffee and cake. By the time we had completed the Trail, a weather front kicked up by the tail of Hurricane Harvey was coming in fast. The intended route into the Langdales was abandoned and we headed for the hostel and showers and clean clothes. A brisk 30 miles and 3000 ft of climb and still time to hit the outdoor shops of Ambleside.

Saturday was saved for the Big One. Nan Bield. Much vanuted by all the Mountain Bike magazines and forums as a must-do ride in the Lakes.

It starts in Staveley, a short drive from Ambleside and once on the bikes you are straight into a lung-buster of a tarmac climb away from the main A road. Pretty soon we were into dry-stone wall lined bridleways and once again the standing water was considerable and we were soaked through. The views, however, make it all worthwhile. Rolling hills with steep fellsides, in autumn hues of Emerald and Ochre, Purple and Granite. Our path took us across rocky and grassy paths, some slippery stream crossings and our first rocky descent into Kentmere offered up our first puncture of the trip also. A steep climb out of the village and another rocky descent into Sadsgill, all good so far, all rideable! Then a long climb, initially following the valley, it looks like an easy shallow climb, leg sapping due to the uneven surfaces but pretty soon it kicks up and as we struggled with the gradient, traction became harder to maintain. Some hiking and a bit more



biking got us to the gate and the bridge and first sandwich stop. There are no cafes, you have to take your own! The next section was ridden for only a short while before the gradient did for us all and a push up was the only option. At the gate we were faced with a choice; go left and up over Hayter Fell or straight on and down Gatesgarth Pass. Not knowing, we followed the guidebook and went down. This path is long steep, littered with big loose rocks and was furiously fast great fun. But...having lost so much elevation on the descent we then faced a long climb back up to Nan Bield Pass which is mostly unrideable and in places requires your bike to be shouldered. Now I like hiking and the walk was a joy, even in cleated shoes, but if an opt out option existed at this point it would be very appealing.

Finally, we reached the shelter at the top and dived in to get out of the wind and surveyed the sinewy singletrack trail that snaked down from the Pass, seemingly all the way to the Irish Sea in the distance. This was why we were here and what had been promised by the magazines. But remember the Lake District paths have been carved over centuries by sheep and weather and latterly, walkers. No trail builders have prepared the surfaces and so the steep step switchbacks at the top are punctuated with two foot drops and large awkwardly placed boulders. The Atherton's may ride this stuff, but your average Newforce member does not. Eventually it begins to level out and the holes morph into hop offs and boulders become just rocks and we are away. Keep your momentum and the bike carries you over the obstacles, slow and you are taking a dive. Once the singletrack ends the trail took us back across several swollen stream crossings to Kentmere from where we opted for the road option back to the car as we had been out for nearly 8 hours, 24 miles and over 4,000 feet of climbing.

With the rain arriving with a vengeance in the lakes on Sunday we decamped to Cannock for a two hour spin around their dry well draining and hardpacked trails for an easy fun session before the final drive home.

* Bits of the Nan Bield trail are thrilling and the setting is spectacular, but how does it compare with other natural trails in the UK? Well, it rides a lot like Sticks Pass from Helvellyn but is not so long, whilst it lacks the white knuckle speed of Minton Batch from the Long Mynd.

Team Commando Does Tide 2 Tide

By Keith Whitten

Roughly six months after Battle On The Beach there was another MTB event at Pembry in south Wales. The Tide 2 Tide was a six hour race run from just after high tide (2pm) to low tide (8pm) on Saturday 30th September. I entered the pairs category with my son Daniel as my partner. Unfortunately, a few days before the event he took a bit of a knock to the head playing rugby so I ended up going solo.

I've not done Battle On The Beach but people who have told me that the four mile course for Tide 2 Tide was significantly shorter. It was a good ride though with plenty of fun singletrack through the wooded dunes and a three quarter mile section on the beach. That beach section though, was the only flat bit. The rest of the course was mostly fairly gently undulating with only one particularly sharp, gravelly rise about half way round. With the weather forecast to be wet and the venue's reputation for being hard on bikes I opted to ride my Surly singlespeed with it's 26+ wheels. I felt it was a good choice although other folks had turned up with everything from fatbikes to cyclocrossers.

On the drive up I'd gone through some torrential rain so at the start I was prepared for the worst with waterproofs and winter boots. When the race started the rain had stopped and at the end of the first lap I was a fair bit warmer than I wanted to be so took a pit stop to lose the waterproof top and winter boots. That was much better and I then put in another four laps at a consistent pace before taking my first food break. That was when the drizzle started. The waterproof top was put back on, which proved to be the right decision as the drizzle set in and only got heavier through to the end of the race.

All that dampness turned the race into a bit of a mucky event. In the woods the sandy base of the dunes is covered in a thin layer of topsoil which became very slimy. Towards the end I even heard a fatbike rider saying he had no grip and there was one off-camber down slope in the first mile that I found myself sliding down on my side on lap eleven. One lap after that took me to twelve laps in 5 hours 37 minutes. Laps finished after the six hour cut off wouldn't count so for me it was race finished. Those twelve laps got me a gloriously midfield 18th out of 35 in 40 plus male solos. I'd packed a camp bed and sleeping bag in the hope that there would be a bit of an after race party but with everyone being so damp and gunky there didn't seem to be any enthusiasm so I said my goodbyes and drove home, getting back just before midnight.

So, 'Team Commando', what's that all about? Well, I officially entered under my shop name, Perfect Balance Cycles but when I arrived at the venue I discovered I'd forgotten to pack any undershorts. I had the outer baggies but nothing else, oops. Thankfully, despite the mucky conditions no sand got where I really wouldn't want it to and no harm was done. Hurrah for Mudhuggers!

Events Calendar

November 5th 2017

Gorrick 25th Anniversary Event, Crowthorne Wood

Newforce are not the only mountain Biking organisation to be celebrating their quarter century this year. By the time you read this the first of their celebration events on October 8th will have been and gone but you should still be able to get an entry for the second on November 5th in Crowthorne Wood.

December 2nd 2017

Global Fatbike Day. Various locations.

This is the day when Fatbikers around the world get together in groups to ride their bikes and drink beer. Charlie the Bikemonger will likely be organising the closest gathering down in Swanage with an evening meal at American Mike's café. Charlie usually has demo bikes which can be booked in advance for those who don't own fatties but are keen to see what all the fuss is about.

December 10th 2017

Club Christmas ride and dinner.

Check the rides list and club message board for further details. If you're going to join us for the dinner afterwards you will need to book beforehand. Please remember that the earlier you can confirm your attendance the easier it is for the organisers.

17th to 19th May 2018

Singlespeed European Championships, Arnhem, Holland

This one's only a shortish drive from the Channel Tunnel so why not convert your bike and go along and join the party. There aren't any hills in Holland are there?

September 14th to 16th 2018

Singlespeed UK, Apse Heath, Isle of Wight.

This event is being organised by the esteemed editor of this magazine. If you would like to help him make it a weekend to remember for all those iron legged entrants please let him know.

££ Club Discounts ££

The following shops offer a discount with your membership card:

Boost bijke Hub www.boostbikehub.co.uk

Brookley Road, Brockenhurst tel: 01590 624204

Cycle Experience

179 Barrack Road, Christchurch tel: 01202 486278

10-20 South Street, Hythe tel: 02380 840765

Sinclair Cycles

9 Westcroft Parade, Station Rd, New Milton BH25 6JG tel 01425 837071

Cycle World Wessex

36 Thornhill Park Road, Southampton. tel: 02380 471140

109a Winchester Road, Romsey. tel: 01794 513344

373 London Road, Portsmouth. tel: 02392 666551

Sandy Balls Cycle Centre

Godshill, Fordingbridge. tel: 01425 657707

Bournemouth Cycleworks, www.bournemouthcycleworks.co.uk

1143-1145 Christchurch Rd, Bournemouth, BH7 6BW tel 01202 424945

Primera www.primera-sports.com

183 Bournemouth Rd, Parkstone, 01202 775588

244 Charminster Rd, Charminster, 01202775588

Perfect Balance Cycles

87 Junction Road, Totton. tel: 02380 871777

Hargroves Cycles www.hargrovescycles.co.uk

150 Commercial Rd Totton. tel: 02380 862011,

Also in Winchester, Chichester & Fareham

Peter Hansford Cycles

91 Olivers Battery Road South, Winchester tel: 01962 877555

Southampton Road, Park Gate

32a Hursley Road, Chandlers Ford

Ride

111 Commercial Road, Parkstone. tel: 01202 741744

The Hub Cycleworks

105-107 Shirley Road, Southampton.

Hampshire Trailer and Roofrack Centre

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

The Woods Cyclery

56 High Street, Lyndhurst, SO43 7BG. tel 02380 282028

Reader's Bikes: Ashley's Capitol Squatch

I built this as I do with all my bikes, from the frame up. I was not looking for another Fat Bike as I had two already but this frame appeared for sale second hand and as it's probably the only one in Europe so I had to go for it! So what makes it different to other Fat Bikes? Well its hand made in the USA and made of steel. The welds are perfect and the tubes are not oversized making it a very light weight frame, not what you would normally expect. American steel and lightweight would not usually go together. As I had a lot of the parts already, I just needed to buy a chainset, gears and some smaller parts. Spec wise its



running Halo Tundra 80mm rims with Hope hubs on a carbon rigid fork, Middleburn chainset, XT brakes and gears which are 1 x 10, more than enough for my needs. Finishing kit wise is a Hope BB, Charge Spoon saddle, On One stem, Titec carbon seat post and Renthall Fatbar Carbon bars so it's made it a very nice build.

As I built this as a summer bike I put some fast rolling Specialized tyres on it which were great and suited the bike perfectly but with wetter weather coming and a few trips planned a bit more bounce was called for so I decided that a new wheelset and front suspension was needed. New wheels where bought as the Bluto fork uses a wider hub and I wanted some grippy tyres and changing tyres when tubeless is a pain so it made sense for 2 new wheels.

The recent trip to the Quantocks was great the custom BeerBabe rubber frame bag to store my stuff and with loads of grip and a bit of bounce the trails felt better than I have ever known so that must be saying something good about it.



If your bike is a little unusual or has a bit of history to it please let the editor know and it too could be featured in a future issue of this magazine.



Mudguards? They're for wimps aren't they?