

NEWFORCE

Autumn 2014 Issue 133





Above: View ffrom the South Downs
Below: View from the Purbecks



Editorial

By Keith Whitten

Welcome to the autumn issue of Newforce. We've had a great summer for riding and indeed doing anything that involves being outdoors but in the last few weeks we've been brought back to the reality of British off road riding frequently being a rather mucky affair. The ride I did last Thursday evening with Allan saw the trails freshly soaked by the heavy showers that had been crossing our area through the day. and barring a very unusually dry autumn the days of breezing in at the end of a ride, parking the bike and heading straight to the shower are now behind us. I suspect all of us that ride regularly, year round have our own routines for re-civilising ourselves at the end of a wet ride. Mine is to hose the bike down before the mud dries, then remove the outer layers of clothing in the back garden and dump them in a bucket before finally heading inside for the shower.

Of course with the change in the season the riding changes too. Speeds drop and spotting the firmest line and feeling for traction as you're pedalling become all important. The goals of the ride change too. With the shorter days there'll be less time spent admiring the views and in the filthiest of conditions the biggest satisfaction of the ride may be just keeping going as long as possible without putting a foot down or getting off to push. It may be harder work riding through the winter months but if you embrace the differences and learn from the challenges then by the time summer comes again you'll surely be a better rider. So dig out your winter kit and come and join us on as many of the club rides as you can this autumn.

Cover photo (and many others in this issue) courtesy of Nigel Aiken

newforce

Your Committee

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

Web Site www.newforce.org.uk

Chairman Roger Shephard Tel: 023 8039 2696
5 Willis Road, Swaythling, Southampton SO16 2NS
roger.shephard@newforce.org.uk

Secretary Sue Marsland
susanm@newforce.org.uk

**Membership
Secretary** Allan Knight
allank@newforce.org.uk

Treasurer Nigel Aiken
Naiken@theiet.org

**Access
Officer** Barry Collier Tel: 01425 475678

**Newsletter
Editor** Keith Whitten
keith@perfectbalancecycles.co.uk

**Web Site
Editor** James Davenport
davenport_james@hotmail.com

Committee

Ian Taylor, Ashley Denham, John & Linda Hawkins,
Dean Johnson, Stu Rogers, Karen and Nick Clark
Steve Keith, Max Streeton, Eleanor Rutter, Robin Knight

newforce

Club Policy & Ride Aims

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

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

Fortnightly Sunday rides, Thursdays nights plus adhoc trips and events

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

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

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

Safety First

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

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

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

Committee Meetings

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

At The New Forest Inn, Emery Down from 8pm

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

Next meeting is: Tuesday 9th December

All welcome!

Finding The Ride Location

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

The search box asks for the **location**

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

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

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

Future Rides

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

If you have a suggestion—let us know!

Ride Reviews

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

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

Photos on the web...

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

Please email Allan at allank@newforce.org.uk

"Hot" Vindaloo, Madras and Jalfrezi

characteristic- strenuous & technical riding

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

"Medium" Tikka Masala

characteristic- moderately strenuous & some technical riding

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

"Cool" Korma

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

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

"Family Rides"

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

And yes, we have named our groups after curries!

Ride Locations

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

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

Ride Times - Sundays

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

Autumn Rides List

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

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

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

Hints and tips: Fairly easy going forest tracks holding up well under wet conditions.

Sunday 9 November 2014 Danebury Hill (ref SU 326 377)

Designated post-ride pub: White Hart pub

Danebury Hill can be reached from Stockbridge by following the High Street westwards through the town (A30). Just as you leave the town boundary, the road turns sharp right and climbs a steep hill. Just as the hill starts to swing round to the left, the road to Danebury Hill can be taken off to the right for a mile or two. The venue is clearly signposted off to the left of this road. We can ride around the eastern perimeter of Middle Wallop airfield before heading westwards via Kentsboro, Oklahoma Farm and Georgia Farm and then turn southwards at Over Wallop. Following on will be a sharp rise up Whiteshoot Hill near Broughton and then it's Kings Somborne (Horsebridge) and the Test Way all the way to Fullerton where on a hot day a call at the Mayfly pub is a must, and on a cooler day is still a possibility. Then it's a mere jaunt up Hazel Down and Charity Down to return to the car park.

Alternatively we could ride off in the opposite direction towards Longstock, Stockbridge Down and Chilbolton but whichever route we take, at this time of year, it is wise to expect mud.

Hints and tips: Some steep climbs/descents. Can be sticky in the dips and there are a fair number of rutted tracks.

Sunday 23 November 2014 Fritham (near the Royal Oak pub) (ref SU 230 140)

Designated post-ride 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 Sluifers and back across Stoney Cross to Minstead.

Hints and tips: Fairly easy going forest tracks holding up well under wet conditions.

Sunday 07 December 2014 Moors Valley from Baker's Hanging (ref SU 129 058)

Designated pub: The Fish Inn (by the narrow stone bridge on the old road westwards out of Ringwood town centre, just before joining the dual carriageway).

This is a good starting point right on the edge of Ringwood Forest which leads to a network of gravel fire roads and some interesting woodland tracks in the forest itself. There is also some north shore close by the car park for those who want to ride that style of track, and the Forestry Commission has built bike specific trails in the woods between the car park and the Moors Valley Visitor Centre. By going farther afield there is a huge selection of bridleways around Holt Heath and Woodlands to the west whilst going north there is some good quality stuff between Cranborne and Alderholt.

Hints and tips: Easy going forest tracks on the gravel fire roads. Technical single track amongst the trees with good surfaces on the engineered trails. Sticky stuff on the field edges.

Sunday 14 December 2014 Christmas ride and lunch (ref SU 275 079)

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 and 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.

Hints and tips: Forest tracks will hold up well especially if cold and crisp.

Sunday 26 December 2014 Beaulieu Road Station (ref SU 349 063)

Designated post-ride pub: Drift Inn

This is the Boxing Day “ride off the turkey” ride and as such is not planned 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.

Hints and tips: Forest tracks will hold up well especially if cold and crisp.

Sunday 11 January 2015 Micheldever Woods (ref SU 529 363)

Designated post-ride pub: Northbrook Arms at East Stratton

We could ride the rolling ridges above Micheldever and the Candovers and link up with the Oxdrove above Alresford or we could head out westwards towards South Wonston and Sutton Scotney and not forgetting the tracks in Micheldever Wood itself. Whichever way we go there are good tracks, nice downhills, and interesting single track.

Hints and tips: Gravel fire roads in the woods will be good going. Off-piste will be a bit muddier.

Sunday 25 January 2015 Appleslade Inclosure (ref SU 183 092)

Designated post-ride pub: Red Shoot Inn

This is the first time we have used this location as a starting point. It is situated a short way from the Red Shoot Inn along the road to the Moyles Court sand pit and as you might expect the route options are similar. We could start with a sharp rise, but on cold muscles this is not recommended so we might make our way across Ibsley Common (soft, gritty sand and a little bit of a slog) towards Abbot's Well and Hampton Ridge and then circle around Amberwood and Sloden Inclosures, Splash Bridge and Broomy Inclosure, then Milkham Inclosure and back via Red Shoot Wood and finally come down the hill we didn't start with.

Hints and tips: Fairly easy going forest tracks holding up well under wet conditions.

Sunday 08 February 2015

Martin

(ref SU 058 193)

Designated post-ride pub: tbc

Designated pub: the nearest pub is The Compasses at Damerham, 4 miles south east towards Fordingbridge.

The village of Martin is situated to the south of the A354 road that runs from Salisbury to Blandford Forum. For most of us, the village is probably most easily reached by heading north-west for eight miles or so out of Fordingbridge passing through Sandleheath, Damerham and Tidpit before arriving at Martin. Approaching from this direction, the car park can be found by taking a left turn in the village itself onto a dead end road at the end of which will be found a car park at the foot of Blagdon Hill. We shall meet at this car park and head out for the bridleways and ancient drove roads which criss-cross Cranbourne Chase. There will be some challenging uphill, fast downhill and panoramic ridgelines in this delightful area.

Hints and tips: Can be slippery on the chalky Cranbourne Chase tracks but other tracks will hold up well especially the ones along the ridges.



THE NEWSLETTER IS
PUBLISHED QUARTERLY
THE NEXT ISSUE IS JANUARY
DEADLINE FOR ARTICLES IS
DECEMBER 31ST
IF YOU HAVE ENJOYED ONE
OF THESE RIDES
SEND IN A SHORT REVIEW....PLEASE!

EVENTS CALENDAR

These are non-club organised events that some of us are expecting to attend. If you like the sound of any of them please go along and increase the club presence. In the case of events involving an overnight stay it would be a good idea to contact one of the others going to ensure everyone can camp close together.

Merida Brass Monkeys Series:

This annual winter enduro series held at the Gorrick venues in north east hampshire has been popular with club members in the past. There are 2 and 4 hour options or 3 hour for the over 50s (that's me now!) and categories down to 14 years old.

Dates are 23rd November, 14th December and 4th January.

See www.gorrick.co.uk for more info.

Pass'portes du Soleil

The 12th running of this 'Grand Randonné' in the French Alps will take place in late June 2015. Entry will open on the 13th February or thereabouts. You don't need to be a downhill monster to do this as the circuit can be easily completed on trails no more difficult than an average British red route. The views are however far more stunning than you'll get at any British trail centre.



££ CLUB DISCOUNTS ££

The following shops offer a discount
on presentation

Cycle Experience

Brookley Road, Brockenhurst
tel: 01590 624204
179 Barrack Road, Christchurch
tel: 01202 486278
10-20 South Street, Hythe
tel: 02380 840765

Cycle World Wessex

36 Thornhill Park Road, Southampton
tel: 02380 471140

109a Winchester Road,
Romsey tel: 01794 513344

373 London Road, Portsmouth
tel: 02392 666551

Sandy Balls Cycle Centre Godshill,
Fordingbridge tel: 01425 657707

Primera

183 Bournemouth Rd, Parsstone
244 Charminster Rd, Charminster

Bicycle Barn

63 Old Milton Road
New Milton
BH25 6DN
01425 616070
bicyclebarn@btconnect.com

Perfect Balance Cycles

87 Junction Road, Totton
tel: 02380 871777

Hargroves Cycles

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

453 Millbrook Road, Southampton
tel: 02380 789160

10 City Road, Winchester
tel: 01962 860005

Also in 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

SSUK 2014 by Keith Whitten

On Friday 5th September I went with my son Daniel to SSUK2014, the UK Singlespeed champs in case you hadn't guessed. This year it was held up in Cannock Chase and organised by two blokes who crop up on various cycling forums under the names Taz and Keef Onespeed. The event followed the simple format of roller racing and beer on the Friday night, main race with beer refreshment stand on Saturday morning, meal and live entertainment with lots of beer on Saturday night and finally on Sunday morning a guided ride which took place without any beer as it had all been drunk the night before.

The build up to the event on it's Facebook page had created a lot of excitement amongst the singlespeeding community with much use of the word 'shonky' and deliberate avoidance of the word 'organisation'. The truth is that it all happened fantastically well and Taz and Keef and their mates achieved event organiser god-like status. The only hiccup was a little bit of vagueness on one bit of the course which led to a few people doing an extra half mile or so, but only one person got upset by that and it was quite ironic that he chose to have his big hissy fit whilst stood next to a refreshment table laden with beer and pork scratchings.

In the main event someone won and was given a tattoo voucher that he looked a bit apprehensive about using. No-one bothered to count places after the first five had finished but I was pleased to finish on the same lap as the winner and Daniel put in a healthy performance for his thirteen years to ride three laps in not much longer than I did my four. The big winner of the day was a young lad on a cyclo cross bike who had damaged his front rim the previous day. The gaffer taped repair hardly made it round the first lap but for his efforts he was given a Surly Pugsly Singlespeed Fat Bike. There were prizes for all sorts of other random stuff. and with his ginger afro Daniel made it to the final of the 'most rugged and windswept' competition, but as the prize was a bottle of rum it's probably best that he didn't win. Neither of us won the bike throwing competition but we had lots of fun trying and watching other people's attempts.

Next year's event will be held in Yorkshire, hosted by a bloke called Wayne with Taz and Keef promising to assist. He's promised it won't be in Dalby but that's all we know for now. I hope I can go. Daniel wants to go too. If you're interested, join the SSUK15 group on Facebook as that's where any news will be posted first.



Daniel bike wanging at SSUK — Keith riding at SSUK — One from the Purbecks club ride









Climbing at the Needles — Martin Wheat's first bike — Kyrgestan



Footwear Review : Exustar SPD Sandals

By Nigel Aiken

(This review is continued from the last issue where due to a formatting error, this portion was lost. Ed)

On the bike, the sandals were secure and didn't budge even when climbing. Breathability was excellent; when it rains or when splashing through a ford, feet get wet but they dry quickly due to the ventilation inherent in the genre. There's no squidging about in a wet shoe/sock combo for the rest of the day. When the ride leader says that the route definitely crosses a wade-able river, the sandals are quick and easy to remove by ripping open your choice of the Velcro straps.

For more relaxed riding, the straps can be loosened but not too much otherwise it's difficult to twist out of the SPDs ! All this adjustment is easily done in situ on the bike.

The sandals are related more to a shoe than a boot and therefore lack ankle support . This Achilles heel means if you were pushing your bike over boulders or along the contours of 45 degree slope, care would have to be exercised. I wonder if that's why the Roman mil-spec sandals had ankle straps?

In sunny weather, extra sun cream needs to be allocated to cover the exposed areas of the foot and the pattern of the sandals will be tanned onto your foot. This might not be desirable if you go barefoot in public or wear open fronted evening shoes.

Off the bike, the sandals are comfortable and airy and performed well for walking, eating food and drinking beer.

Some cyclists wear their sandals all year round so as summer came to an end I was interested to find out how far into Autumn I could wear them. In winter, cycling with gloves and shoes, it is my fingers and toes that feel the cold first. The weather on the GRIDIRON 100km randonne (round the forest) last October was at times, a bit miserable. Mainly grey skies with spells of icy rain. By lunch time my fingers were complaining of the cold, so I swapped to winter gloves but my feet were OK. No doubt there was an additional energy loss associated with this but for some reason my feet in the sandals weren't cold. Maybe because my toes were more mobile rather than being locked in a static position in a shoe. I've certainly not had any frozen toe problems when cycling recently in the June sunshine, where my feet have been air cooled and well ventilated.

Some things I've not yet tried with sandals – wearing waterproof socks, wearing overshoes, visiting Diltons Farm.

The New Forest camping association

By Steve Samways

A bit of info on Camping club I do with the family through the year. As Newforce was formed for the rights of the rider so the camping club was formed for the campers, so we have things in common,. It would be interesting to know how many campers we have in New force.

www.nfcca-camping.org.uk

This is the New Forest Camping and Caravan Association. For those who enjoy the forest on 2 wheels or 2 legs this is a great way to stay in some nice parts of our great area.

The club was formed in 1974 at the time the Forestry Commission camp sites were being closed or restricted.

The Forest Camper Association was formed to enable campers to stand up and be counted to help protect the rights of campers within the Forest

In 1977 the name was changed to New Forest Camping and Caravan Association and continues to this day.

Through the early years the club's main aim was to keep pressuring the forestry commission and Verders to update camp sites with in the Forest.

Membership over the years gradually increased and in 1980 the club was able to apply for a exception certificate which allows camping in farmers fields for up to 5 days.

This is known as a rally, with facilities being minimal with

mains water and a toilet disposal and very little else apart from lots of space.

The club this year celebrated 40 years of being an independent association and holds regular weekend and bank holiday rallies throughout the year.

We stay within the National Park as well as venturing further afield such as Chichester, The Witterings, Wellington Country Park, Manor Farm, Breamore House and Royal Victoria Country Park.

The site fees are very reasonable ranging from £7.00 to about £12.00 per unit per night depending on what the club puts on, bank holidays the club owns its own marquee which is then used for games, meals, and general meeting up. Because it's a rally also there is no rush to be off site on the Sunday unlike the main campsites in the Forest

Being a keen rider this is a great way of riding and visiting different parts of the forest without the drive before or after the ride.

Camping in a rally field is different from the normal campsite experience because there is no set out pitch to restrict where or what direction you're facing, you can decide on where in the field you go how close to others and take over space as required. We camp with a caravan + awning + extra tent or annex on awning + gazebo plus bikes. Charcoal barbecues are welcome and all the other bits that end up getting spread out around the pitch.

We always welcome new campers

Happy riding and camping
Steve

What do club members get up to when they're not riding bikes?

In this issue Max tells us a bit about the climbing he's involved in:

When Keith asked me to write about what else I do for the mag it was easy to decide on the subject. Although I do many sports, the one I spend most time on, and certainly the most trips away doing, is climbing.

However it gets more complex as climbing covers many things. For some cycling or walking up a hill is 'climbing' a hill, but that is not what I mean. So I thought I would talk about how I got into climbing and go on from there about what climbing is for me.

I first got into rock climbing about 25 years ago through going down to North Devon surfing. When there was no surf we climbed on the sea cliffs at Baggy Point near Croyde. Climbing above the sea in the sun in a great location soon got me hooked. This is what is called trad (traditional) rock climbing. Using a rope and protecting yourself from a fall by putting things such as metal wedges (gear) in cracks etc that the rope is then connected to.

The counterpart to 'trad' climbing is 'sport' climbing. This is where people have drilled holes to fix bolts into the rock to connect the rope to. In Britain we are protective of our limited rock and this is only allowed in specific and less interesting places, such as old quarries. I don't do much sport climbing!

When winter came somebody suggested going to Scotland, where I first tried winter climbing on Ben Nevis. As is typical of Scotland it was wet and windy and not cold enough to be frozen! However for some reason I keep going back. Much of the climbing in Scotland is what is called 'mixed' climbing which is on a mixture of rock, snow, ice (and often

frozen turf!).

Trips to Canada and the Alps in winter offered much better conditions, climbing frozen waterfalls in the sun. This is proper Ice climbing. Ice screws are used to provide anchors in the ice similar as for rock climbing and in thick ice they can be just as secure.

Trips to the mountains of North Wales and the Lake District gave me a taste for longer climbs, and the next logical step was to head out to the Alps for some proper mountains. The first week long trip got me up the 4000m peak Barre de Ecrins and I have been going back every summer since for at least two weeks (more recently now not working so much :-).

For some climbing is about getting strong and pulling yourself up on tiny holds, however for me it is more about where it gets you. This may be sitting on a mountain, but also I like some of the more obscure places. For example climbing the chalk ridge at the Needles on the Isle of Wight, or routes that take you through caves in the rock.

That quest for something different lead me to Kyrgyzstan this summer to climb in a little explored area near the Chinese border. With no roads we had to get a lift in on a military helicopter to our base camp which was home for 3 weeks. From there we still had two days walk to some of our climbs on peaks which we were probably the first people to climb. Very different from the sea cliffs in Devon.

So what if you want to try climbing yourself? Well probably the best way is to join a club. I'm slightly biased and would recommend the Wessex Mountaineering club. I didn't say no quick enough and ended up being the president!

24 Hours In A Sumo Suit

By Richard Male

What makes someone want to ride a bike for 24 hours in one go???? The only logical answer I can come up with is “to see if I can.”

Pretty lame I know, but I have completed a few 12 hour events – I cannot really call them races – and when I had finished I have looked at the poor haggard lads and lasses who have just kept going with cheers and shouts of encouragement, and wondered if I could do that?

So earlier this year, as I struggled to fit my laptop on my post-Christmas lap, I signed up to do Bontrager 24/12 in late July of this year. I figured I was old enough not to have any ridiculous ideas about going fast/racing (I was also going to going to ride in a sumo suit after all), yet young enough to not wreck or break anything in the process (which is a laugh, given I bust a collar bone at Mountain Mayhem a few years back).

So how do you prepare and train for 24hrs Solo?

Naturally these days the first thing is you take to the internet and see what pearls of wisdom sit on blogs and forums – there are some very serious and intense people out there, it is quite scary! So I decided to lose some weight – the less weight I have to lug up the hills the better, try doing some Spin classes as it was cold dark and very very wet out at that time of year, and purchase a road bike. As the evenings and mornings got brighter and the rain became less frequent, I started commuting to work on the road bike (Totton to Ringwood – 36 miles round trip). I even stopped drinking – maybe I was taking this too seriously after all!

So by June I was feeling fitter and lighter than I could ever remember being, all was going well, plans were made for a long weekend at the race venue near Plymouth, my partner and sons were lined up to be my pit crew, other members for the Vindaloo group had entered into the 12 hour event In Sumo Suits and on Fat Bikes (so trackside disco and ‘Jump of Doom’ would be present), I washed my sumo suit again and even the BBC weather were predicting a long hot summer ☺. Then a bit of a bombshell, I was found to be anaemic and the cause at that point was not known and would not be found out until into August ! I then took to the internet again and found lots of scary stuff, but also helpful things on things like diet and exercise and that if I felt ok, doing the ‘race’ would not cause any issues. So during July I started on a paleo style diet (plenty of protein, nuts, seeds vegetables, fruit and oils. Cutting back on the dairy products and wheat) which gave me plenty of Iron rich foods and also a great deal of energy.

So, race weekend arrived and weather was set fair, on the journey down I discussed the 'race' strategy with my pit crew and came to the conclusion that I would complete the first lap, then if I felt ok I would do another, then repeat as required for the next 24 hours and rest when I wanted for as long as I wanted. I know this may sound silly but whenever you enter a 'race' you always have a figure in your mind as to what you will do by the time you finish, but this time it was one lap at a time.

Race Weekend – Camp all set up by Thursday lunchtime, and it was time to chill and fettle a little with the bikes. My bike for this ride was a 29er On-one Scandal – I managed to resist the urge to add new shiny bits or tinker too much it all worked well, my only change was to put on another cassette that had a 34 tooth on it (running it 1x9, I figured I could do with the help on the hills). Thursday evening was spent 'dad' dancing round Ashley's fire-pit to the trackside disco – even my boys gave in and gave it a go! Friday was all about eating and drinking right and a pre-race ride of the course with my son – he was too young for the main race but went in the Junior race on Saturday morning (a creditable 10th – well done Jack). The course was perfect..... dry and fast, plenty of single track, roots, rocks, bomb-holes, river splash and somehow they made it so the climbs were short, steep and quick. Finishing the sighting lap on the Friday afternoon led nicely into the complimentary beer and cheese tasting and live music. All possible as the event is not too big – I think about 2000 riders – and has a great atmosphere and laid back vibe.

Race Day - I don't know what it is about the morning before a race, but no matter how much time you give yourself, the last 30 minutes is always a mad rush. And so it was on the Saturday morning, I had eaten well and drunk enough, checked my bike, laid out my riding kit, been to the loo lots and even watched my son's race and still was the last of the Vindy's to get to the start line. We then chat to the folks around us for 10 minutes or so and realise that a lot more people are in the start behind us, and unlike us they are dressed like they want to ride in a bike race.

The hooter sounds..... And we are off on a short formation loop round the campsite before passing through the start to get going proper. The lap is around 7 miles long and the first mile or so is up – A short tarmac climb takes you up the steepest climb with minimal fuss, but with a steady climb after that to highest point. The weather is fine and warm but with the climb, the Sumo Suits are hot. It is not all bad news on the first climb, as they have a strategically placed ice cream van handing out lollies ☺. The group of Vindy sumos continue on round the first lap at a steady pace on the ups and flying on the downs, and the downhill parts are great fun. I think we completed the first lap in a little over an hour and after a short drink break, we go out again on lap number two. And so it continues for the next few hours with some sumos taking a lap or two to recover and re-hydrate, while others 'race' on in groups of 2 or 3. Wherever and whenever we rode the shouts of "SUMO!" came from riders, marshalls and spectators.

I felt good, so just kept riding and took little breaks between some of the laps, had to make sure I drank plenty as the day got hotter and hotter and as evening fell, it actually got worse as the wind dropped and whenever you rode into the woods it was so humid. Unlike previous races and long rides I had done, I drank water rather than sport or energy drinks and instead of gels and energy bars I went for trail mix – with a few extras. I did this as the trail mix provides complex carbs for slow release of energy, protein and plenty of Iron and minerals which I hoped would help with the anaemia. To the trail mix I added extra salted peanuts to help with salt loss because of the heat. I have to say, that this is what I will eat and drink on a race in future – I had no sickly taste in my mouth, the water was easy to drink with the extra salt in the trail mix. After six or seven laps I stopped for a bite to eat – not your typical pit stop, but I needed a break from the bike – of BBQ salmon & Satay chicken, salad and half a baked potato. Yum. The next half a lap was taken at a sedate pace to ensure I kept hold of my nice dinner.

A couple more laps brought me up to close to midnight and the sumos massed for a final formation lap timed to finish just after midnight and that would be there 12hr race done, a ride round in line-astern brought out many shouts and cheers. At about 10 to midnight, a group of Sumos was seen ‘lurking’ on the hill above the arena and finish line enjoying a nice cool bottle of cider before the midnight fireworks went off, we then rolled down the hill for the 12hr fellas to finish.... I rolled through the start and started another lap (number 10) but I did not finish that lap until 9 hours later! As when I passed our camp I could not resist the draw of my bed.

So in the early daylight of Sunday morning I made it out of my bed and got back on my bike – I would like to say I was refreshed, but I was probably better off than those racers that carried on through the night. I say this, as my next three laps were my best and my fastest and a bit of a blur!!! I was loving the course still and my body was not complaining as much as I thought it would – I even did the steep road climb out of the saddle on my final lap – much to the shock of the riders I over took. The finish was epic – loads of cheers and I even gave a high-five to the great Keith Bontrager. I then sat down to a beer and a bacon roll, shower and then sleep.

I felt proud of my 13 laps, it was a great weekend and race with amazing people around me and supporting me. I will be doing the 24 hour race again next year and without any health issues and hopefully with a little less sleep and a few more laps.

Another in the series of “First (Mountain) Bikes”

By martin Wheat

Mountain bikes slowly impinge on my consciousness in the mid 80s, helped by the little lad with a BMX saying “look! there’s a grown-up one”.

The Muddy Fox Courier at £300 brought a solid standard machine within my grasp in May ‘87. With its steel frame beneath me, 21 thumbby gears (not indexed) and cantilever brakes, the family didn’t see me in the evenings for a month. Very occasionally around the forest, I’d see a tyre track.

By August my horizons expanded to the Ridgeway: train to Tring; B&B; ride to Avebury with B&B at Wantage, and on home to Lyndhurst. {Photo 2} About then there was also a solo westbound South Downs trip with a B&B at Duncton.

At some stage I gave it some indexed gears – what a revelation! ... and clipless pedals that caused frequent offs. Later, race PA greeted it with “I thought the last of those had died years ago” and I knew I had to move on.

Where is it now? Maybe still in the ditch in Amsterdam, abandoned when the rear wheel rim wore out again.

Next Time in Newforce

Hopefully the current wet weather won't continue long enough to put too many of you off getting on your bikes and there will be some tales to tell of autumn riding.

Most of the regular groups will have had their Christmas get togethers which usually result in some good photos.

Most of us will have a little extra time off over the festive period so please put it to good use and get typing.

Anything you might contribute to a conversation in the pub after a couple of beers will do. But maybe hold back on the sort of embarrassing stuff we all spout when we're completely trollied.

The deadline for the winter issue will be early January



Reader's Bikes

Keith's Dean

Well folks you can't say you weren't warned. As there have been no other submissions for 'Reader's Bikes', here's one of mine:

The story of this one starts back in 1993. I'd been mountain biking seriously for a couple of years on a Kona Fire Mountain but was lusting after an Orange Clockwork. At that time the Orange was the bike to have and as soon as my student grant came through in January '93 I was off to GA Cycles to spend it on my very own Clockwork. Blowing a term's money all at once meant that to live I had to take a job on the weekend graveyard shift at a local petrol station but that didn't matter, I had a Clockwork. The bike didn't disappoint, it was light, fast and in the following few years I had some of my best ever race results on it. Time and technology moved on though and as the Clockwork wasn't built to take suspension forks or disc brakes it was replaced in 1999 with an Orange Evo 2. The Evo 2 was designed around the same philosophy, short and compact to make it agile and easy to flick flack through woodland singletrack. As with the Clockwork that preceded it I was a very happy owner of the Evo 2 and remained that way until the mid noughties when I started feeling the lust for something in titanium. If you read the mountain bike magazines at that time you could be forgiven for thinking that no-one rode mountain bikes anywhere south of the M4. The bike reviews seemed primarily concerned with how well bikes rattled their way down rocky hillsides and putting effort into pedalling up the climbs or through flatter areas was deeply unfashionable. Hence the trend in bike design had drifted towards longer frames and slacker steering angles to give more stability at high speeds. Living in the south of England and enjoying riding tight wooded singletrack, stability was not what I wanted. I'd become aware of Dean Bicycles through a review of one of their products in a magazine and learned from their website that all their frames were hand built in Boulder, Colorado and that they offered a custom build option for a similar price to other, higher

profile companies' standard products. Over the summer of 2005 I swapped a few emails with Dean and measured or read up on the geometry of all the bikes I liked (older Oranges) and all those I didn't (everything else including newer Oranges). I came up with a set of measurements that I thought should work for me and sent them off to Dean with a request to point out anything I had done that might be inadvisable. They suggested that adding an inch to the top tube length would be a good idea so I wrote back asking them to knock half an inch off it. I then sent them the required amount of money and waited.

And waited.

The autumn came and went and still I waited. Finally, in February 2006, the frame arrived. I built it up as quickly as I could and was left with a 40 minute slot on a damp and drizzly February morning to go for a first ride in the local woods. It was good. Very good, feeling light, responsive and lively underneath me. That first build was very much 'cross country racer' with a long stem, narrow flat bars and even bar ends and that was how I rode it when I did my first and only solo 24 hour race at the Mountain Mayhem that year. In the years since then the stems I've used on it have become progressively shorter and the handlebars wider. It's also been singlespeed for the last few years as I converted it that way for another Mountain Mayhem and found I just really liked it that way.

In the last couple of years the Dean has increasingly taken second place to my 29er as there are many situations where the lower drag of bigger wheels is preferable but when the trails are properly dry and twisty and I just want to play I've not found any other bike that gives me the same feeling of 'yep, I got it right there'.

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.



