

Newforce 158

Autumn 2021



Welcome to Newforce 158, the autumn newsletter. As I write this the rain is hammering down and summer has finally ended. Well you don't really think I was going to sit in front of a keyboard while the sun was shining do you?

With post lockdown freedom there's been plenty going on. The first club trip for a couple of years has taken place and many of us have individually gone off and done 'stuff we couldn't do last year'. You can read more about a couple of my highlights further on, but first I'll tell you of an important discovery I made over the summer.

It happened one Thursday evening when our group was reduced to just Phil Hotston and myself. Knowing we both possessed gravel bikes I suggested we ride them in preference to our regular fatter tyred steeds and over the course of that evening we both came to the same conclusion. Gravel bikes are really quite rubbish when ridden on gravel. On steep climbs the skinny, hard pumped tyres spit the gravel out behind and lose traction with anything more than gentle pressure on the pedals, on loose corners they slide almost as soon as you start leaning and on bumpy trails your wrists and hands get severely rattled. It was just like being back in the 1990s. There were many times on that ride that I was wishing for far fatter tyres to do justice to the ground we were riding over or just give a greater confidence of not crashing. The upside however was that with the addition of a few fastish road miles we did ride ten more miles than we usually do in the same time, and that meant we got to ride some nice fun trails in places a bit further from home that neither of us had been to for a long time. Looking back on it the following day it didn't seem so bad. We'd done something different and created a memory that stood out from all the other highly enjoyable but somewhat samey Thursday nights. So Phil, shall we do it again sometime? Just occasionally. Not too often.



Newforce Committee Meeting Minutes

Held via Zoom at 8:00pm on Monday **10th October '21**

Present: Roger Shephard, Eleanor Rutter, Sue Marsland, Martin Wheat, Keith Whitten

Apologies: Steve Keith, Ian Taylor, Jack Lawrie

The previous minutes were accepted as a true record.

1. Club Secretary

In the continuing absence of one, Martin volunteered to take the minutes.

2. Ride organisation

We shall continue to ask people to sign up for rides, to be able to see how many may turn up and to help identifying leaders.

Sue will accept signing up on 'facebook' now that the overall numbers are not constrained by regulation.

Recruit ride leaders:

- We shall *all* Encourage riders to take turns at leading the groups during a ride through interaction during rides
 - Ian and Sue will advertise rides on the Forum and facebook with an invitation to riders to indicate their willingness to lead all or part of a ride, with a view to keeping group sizes manageable and being sympathetic to our surroundings and neighbours
- ... from the previous meeting, *Ian* will investigate a Google Cloud link, or similar, that could act as a repository for .gpx (and similar) files of ride routes.

3. Ride meeting places

... as previously set:

24 th October- Farley Mount

7th November – Moors Valley

21 st November – Whiteparish

The *usual people* will publish these, set at this meeting:

5th December – Bolton's Bench, followed by a meal at the Swan at Swan Green

19th December – Winchester South: Garnier Road

26th December – Happy Cheese, Ashurst

9th January – Fritham

23rd January – Swinley Forest

Bikes

Sue will survey in facebook what demand there may be for gravel-riding groups.

We shall retain the status quo for e-bikes – that they are welcome to join us for rides at the pace of unassisted riders.

4. Social

Eleanor will find out whether the Swan Inn at Swan Green can accommodate us for a Christmas lunch on 4th December: advertise and organise it, with our thanks.

5. Membership, at 10/10/21

Since we resumed asking for subscriptions, 8 members have lapsed, and since the beginning of the last quarter we have welcomed 8 new memberships, so the current count sits at 112 individuals and 12 families.

2 subs are outstanding from August and will lapse at the next monthly update. 3 are outstanding and will receive letters at the end of the month.

Martin will repeat a message on the Forum to inform about the 14-month addition to membership subs.

Trips

We congratulated *Sue* on her organisation of the Black Mountains and Brecon Beacons trip. In turn she thanked Penny, Nick, Martin and Nigel for their ride leading.

Sue will survey members for a preferred location for next year's trip, and preferred dates – probably in June so we need to commit soon – and will need help with organising it.

Money

We reviewed the treasurers report and there were no unanswered questions.

Sue and Ian will arrange for the small surplus from the Brecons trip, to be given to to their local mountain rescue.

Website

... from last meeting's minutes:

Ian will mark up a site map of the existing site for circulation and comment

Jack will look at off-the-shelf packages that would avoid the costs of a complete re-write.

... newly determined

Roger will ask *Ian* and *Jack* for an update, and *Jack* to remove the "Latest News:" column, archive? the gallery pictures and perhaps create a link to pictures on the Facebook page.

Magazine

All will consider writing contributions to the magazine to send to Keith: most obviously something about the Brecons trip, but also any others.

We appreciated this year's calendar. *Keith and Martin* will produce and distribute a calendar for 2022.

Meetings

The AGM will be on 14th December 2021 at 7:30pm followed directly by the next quarterly meeting, and we accepted *Eleanor's* generous offer to host it at her home.

Roger will generate an AGM agenda and *Martin* will e-mail it with an invitation to both meetings to all members.

The Club Brecon Beacons Trip

No words but here are some pictures if you haven't already seen them on Facebook.











The Armchair Adventure Festival

By Keith Whitten

This was the first in-person event organised by Matt Bishop and Reece Gilkes, two young men who got themselves into the Guinness Book Of Records a few years ago for being the first to circumnavigate the globe travelling by motor scooter and sidecar. Through lockdown they had set up a number of online talks by moderately prominent adventurers, hence the 'Armchair' bit. This event was held over the last weekend in September at Mount Edgecumbe, a fine National Trust property with extensive grounds on the western side of Plymouth Sound.

As far as I am aware most of the advertising had been aimed at the motorcycling community and that was where the majority of the attendees came from, although there were a good number of camper vans and cars to be seen on site. It was noticeable that there was a far greater proportion of female attendees than I recall seeing at any other motorcycling or cycling event I have been to. The speakers and activities on offer were highly diverse with appeal to far more than just the motorcycling community. The talks throughout the weekend ranged from the practical; survival in remote places and foraging, to wild swimming guides and accounts of travelling in remote places by Landrovers, motorcycles, bicycles, boats and on foot. The activities on offer were heavily subsidised by the organisers; an hour's sailing with Conrad Humphries £25, an hour's paddleboarding or kayaking with instruction if needed (and a bonus of close encounters with dolphins) £5 and free mountain bike use and morning yoga. There really was so much in the schedule it was hard to work out when to fit meals in, even breakfast, with the wild swimming folks gathering down at the bay at 08:15 each morning. Surprisingly, the only morning I made it down there to join them at that time was Sunday, the morning after my own most alcoholic and latest to bed night of the weekend, although on the Saturday morning I joined a handful of other festival goers to attend the local Parkrun which is regularly held on another part of the same grounds. A bar and live music on the Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights was the icing on the cake.

Of the talks I attended the standouts were as follows:

Jack Groves' tale of becoming the youngest to ride a motorbike around the world, despite being locked down in Peru for eight months. Their lockdown was far stricter than ours with soldiers on the streets enforcing it.

Jamie Ramsay on quitting his city job to run from Canada to Argentina pushing all his camping kit in an unmodified baby stroller.

Conrad Humphreys recounting his recreation of Captain Bligh's 4000 mile journey from Tonga to Timor in a open boat after the mutiny on the Bounty. His crew included Ant Middleton and the voyage was filmed and shown on Channel 4. Conrad also captained the sailing activity in the very same boat down in the bay over the weekend.

Simon Parker, a journalist who cycled the British coast from Shetland to the Scilly Isles last year researching stories of how lockdown affected our more remote communities which were serialised in the Daily Telegraph.

The highlight had to be Ben King. His bid to become the youngest to motorcycle round the world was almost instantly derailed by both a rubbish sense of direction and frequent party invites en-route. His presentation style can best be described as that of an over caffeinated springer spaniel and he had the audience in near constant laughter for over an hour at his tales and photos of the situations he got himself into.

The evening music proved to be equally well chosen, with Thursday's band The Cabarats describing themselves a 'Balkan Reggae', Friday's Malavita being more of a Salsa sound and Saturday's headliner Land Of The Giants verging towards ska. Saturday's warm up act, Rodney Branigan, a Texan with the ability to play two guitars at once was also well worth turning up to see. Reading the event brochure as I write this piece shows all the acts to have impressive festival CVs and also how many other speakers and activities there were that I wasn't able to experience.

To sum up it was a fantastic way to spend a long weekend and Matt and Reece made a total success of something they have obviously never done before. If it happens again next year I will certainly be there.

Stop Press. I received an email today to say that it is happening again next year. At Mount Edgecumbe once again and over the weekend of 22nd to 25th September. Early bird tickets will be on sale from 29th October at £89. See <https://www.armchairadventurefestival.com/> for more.





Product Review -- CooSpo Heart Rate Monitor Armband

By Keith Whitten

Early this year I finally caved in and upgraded my Strava membership from free to subscription. One of the benefits of this is that I can now link heart rate data to my activity records. This is something I'd been interested in for a while. A very long while to tell the truth, right back to my triathlon days of the eighties and early nineties when a few of the richer members of the Tri club had the early Polar monitors. This year, having done a reasonable job of getting back into running I finally got to indulge that curiosity.

I found the CooSpo for £40 on Amazon and it seemed to fit the bill; heart rate data transmission pure and simple and attached by an armband rather than having a bulky chest strap to keep in place. Synching it with my phone was straightforward and off I went for a quick jog round the block to ensure it did what it should. The owner's manual suggests it is worn at the top of the lower arm, just below the elbow but I've found it to work equally well for me at the top of my upper arm where it can sit under a T shirt sleeve. There's just one button for switching on and off and the manufacturer claims up to 20 hours use from a full charge.

So what have I learned from using it? To be honest, not a lot that anyone with GCSE Sports Science couldn't have told you. The variation of effort over the course of most bike rides means that my average heart rate for a ride is rarely more than three quarters that of a steady run. It has reinforced the benefit of a proper warm up when doing a competitive run. If I run steadily from cold my highest heart rate of the activity will be in the first five minutes, despite running faster later on. So, proof that a warm body works more efficiently, which again isn't much of a revelation but nice to see quantifiably in black and white. And that's what it's all about for me, a bit of geeky looking at graphs and self analysis. Definitely a purchase with no regrets.



And finally

If you think this looks a little too much like the Keith Whitten personal blog, only you can do something to change that by providing me with more material to include in future editions.

A few words about anything you think could be a talking point is welcome. Maybe an event you've been to, something you've bought that you're pleased with or even something non-biking but preferably involving outdoor activity that you enjoy.

Until next time, Happy Mountain Biking.