

NEWFORCE

Spring 2017 Issue 143





Editorial

By Keith Whitten

Welcome to the spring 2017 issue of Newforce. I hope you all have your 2017 Newforce calendar displayed proudly somewhere. If you've looked closely at it you may have noticed a couple of errors. Firstly, I got Mothers day wrong. I'm not sure how that happened, is it on different days in different countries? Secondly, I have the clocks being put forward twice, once in March and then again in April. That was a simple copy and paste error where I missed deleting one piece of superfluous information after copying the day/date grid from one month to the next. There is however, a precedent for this. During the second world war the clocks were advanced two hours with the aim of boosting productivity and ensuring munitions workers got home safely without having to travel excessively in the dark. Remember that during the war streetlights would have been turned out in areas considered to be air raid targets and vehicle headlights were mostly blacked over with just thin slits left clear. In my late teens I spent several summers and one winter working at Browns Golf Course and Canoe Lake on the Isle of Wight where several of the elderly groundsmen remembered those times. Apparently the double summer time was kept in force over the winter one year with the result that in Scotland in the darkest months it was hardly getting light before lunchtime! Advancing the clocks one hour beyond normal was also trialled between 1968 and 1971 to put us in step with the rest of Europe.

At the time of writing spring is now properly with us and several groups from the club have already ventured a little further afield. The Jalfrezi trip to Bike Park Wales managed to coincide with some fantastic and genuinely warm spring sunshine. Yes, in Wales. Really! The Vindys and a few others travelled to Pembry in South Wales for the Battle on the Beach, where it was once again sunny. The evidence for both of these can be seen to the left. Wearing Sumo suits and despite having drunk an awful lot of cider the night before, Ashley and Robin finished joint 50th (out of 97) in the fatbike category. Jenn Forrester was also there and picked up a very impressive 5th place in the ladies race.

The big news for the club is that we will shortly be celebrating the 25th anniversary of our founding. The official celebration will be a ride and barbecue at Wilverly Plain on Sunday 14th May. Fingers crossed for more good weather.

Your Committee

Committee meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every third month at the New Forest Inn at Emery Down. All club members are welcome to attend and raise any points or questions.

Chairman	Roger Shephard roger.shephard@newforce.org.uk 02380 392696	
Secretary	Sue Marsland susanm@newforce.org.uk	
Membership Secretary	Martin Wheat membership@neforce.org.uk	
Treasurer	Nigel Aiken naiken@theiet.org	
Access Officer		
Newsletter Editor	Keith Whitten keith@perfectbalancecycles.co.uk	
Website Editor	James Davenport james_davenport@hotmail.com	
Other Committee Members	Ian Taylor John Hawkins Linda Hawkins Eleanor Rutter Dean Johnson Clive French Allan Knight	Steve Keith Malcolm (Max) Streeton Stu Rogers Karen Clark Nick Clark

Club Policy & Ride Aims

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

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

We organise regular rides, fortnightly on Sundays and weekly on weekday evenings.

We organise multi day trips to other areas to experience some of the best riding this country has to offer.

Full conditions of membership and how to join are published on the club website under the 'The Club' tab.

Membership Fees

Individual	1 year £15.00	2 years £27.50	5 years £65.00
Family	1 year £22.50	2 years £40.00	5 years £90.00

Riding With Us

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

Cycle helmets are compulsory on all club rides.

Please dress appropriately for the likely weather conditions.

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

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

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

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

Our Organised Sunday Rides

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

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

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

To aid finding the start location we recommend using **www.streetmap.co.uk** 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.

Spring and Summer Rides List

Sunday 16 April 2017
(ref SY 955 827)

Corfe Castle, Purbecks (all day ride)

Designated pub: Lunch stop

This ride has been changed from the previous posting. It was to have been Goodwood but is now in the Isle of Purbeck. Some members are staying in Swanage for the weekend and more members will join them for the day, either travelling by car to the start point or indeed there is a small group taking the Sandbanks ferry and riding the short distance to the start point. Whatever your point of origin, the ride will start officially from the Norden Park and Ride facility just near Corfe Castle and that is the map reference given above. Please note that there is a car parking charge payable at meters in the Park and Ride facility. The start time will be the usual 10.00am roll out of the car park. Please allow a bit of extra time to get to the start as it is Easter Sunday.

Last time we rode from here we had a day of great riding, good company, splendid views, challenging climbs, and fast descents, and the sun shone. See the photographs on <http://www.newforce.org.uk/gallery/purbecks-may-2016/>

Lunch for the medium group will be a late timing so bring some snacks to keep you going.

Sunday 30 April 2017
(ref SU 058 193)

Martin , car park

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 ridgeways in this delightful area.

**Sunday 28 May 2017 Inkpen Beacon, between Vernham Dean and Hungerford
(ref SU 371 620)**

Designated pub: This is a day ride

This location is on one of the viewpoint spots along the Wayfarers Walk so it can get a bit full of car-sitting view-gazers but at our time of arrival, we should be alright for a parking spot. If push comes to shove, then there is another car park at Walbury Hill just a short bike ride (slightly longer by car) at SU 380 616 and we can re-group easily if we do get split up by weight of tourist numbers. From here the rides will most likely be along the ridge line in either direction, or dropping straight off the side of the hill to take in Coombe, Linkenholt, Coombe Woods, Vernham Dean, Hippenscombe, and lots of other tracks used time and again in the Test Valley Tours and Off Road Challenges. Great riding in all directions and magnificent vistas to gaze upon during refuelling stops. It is also cheaper than the Test Valley Tours because we don't charge you £15.00 to ride to see such sights as the Wilton Windmill, Crofton Beam Engines, Great Bedwyn canal locks and the Great Western Railway.

**Sunday 14 May 2017 Wilverley – the NewForce 25th Anniversary BBQ
(ref SU 254 006)**

Designated post-ride venue: the BBQ facility adjacent to the car park and booked for our exclusive use.

The riding can take us around Wilverley itself with some interesting tracks known only to the initiated and of course there is a wide choice of tracks beyond this including the old railway line for the gentler paced riders amongst us. This could be extended around the edges of Avon Tyrrell and Bisterne Common. In another direction lies Bashley and the northern edges of New Milton. Or we could venture north towards Ober Lodge and the area around Rhinefield.

We are advertising this as a family event and we are trying to organise a shorter, more gentle ride for younger family members. Other than that, the regular paced rides will feature, as normal.

The format of the barbecue will be a £5 personal contribution per attendee, and the club will provide charcoal, cooking tools, a master chef, barbecue style food and accompaniments, and we are open to offers of cakes and desserts being provided by club members and will reimburse them at cost. Please bring your own drinks and cups/plastic glasses, but the club will provide plates and cutlery.

Sunday 11 June 2017 QE Park on the A3 north of Horndean
(ref SU 719 184)

Designated pub: The QE Park café for coffee and cake

There are several interesting tracks beyond the obvious choice of the official designated blue, red and wall-of-death offerings in the Park itself. Moving outside of the park boundaries will lead us onto large chunks of the South Downs Way. In one direction there is direct access to Butser Hill and the East Meon/Privett neck of the woods, whilst in the other, the SDW takes you out towards Harting Downs and Beacon Hill.

The start point is the visitor centre car park, so don't forget to bring some money for the parking meter.

This ride is not recommended for newcomers unless they are confident on steep ascents and descents and can manage the distance coupled with the terrain. For our regular attendees, the tracks are reasonably good although there are some chalk ascents and descents that will get slippery if they get wet with a summer shower.

Sunday 25 June 2017 Moyles Court
(ref SU 164 083)

Designated pub: The Alice Lisle

This is a popular location situated at the Moyles Court sand pit. From here most of the available routes start with a short sharp rise but once that is out of the way, there are options for rolling on across Rockford Common (firm going) towards Linwood, the Red Shoot and Milkham, or taking a course over Ibsley Common (soft, gritty sand and a little bit of a slog) towards Abbot's Well and Hampton Ridge. We might even make a foray westwards across the River Avon and have a thrash around Ringwood Forest, Boveridge Heath, Ashley Heath and Horton Common, all well worth a visit.

Sunday 09 July 2017 Isle of Wight – all day ride – from Portsmouth ferry terminal (ref SZ 631 996)

Designated pub: Pub lunch on the ride.

This will be a day ride but the starting point will be Portsmouth ferry terminal, linking to Fishbourne on the island, because we constantly neglect the eastern end of the island.

Keith Whitten has done a recce and reports that there is a car park on University land about 5 minutes ride away on the corner of Museum Road and the A3 that is open to the public at weekends for £2 all day. Alternatively there are other

public car parks in the vicinity but they tend to be rather pricey, or you could park in some cheaper options in the northern parts of Portsmouth and cycle a bit further to the ferry.

The ferry takes bikes for free and can be booked in advance through the Wightlink web page. We will be taking the 9.30 a.m. sailing for which you need to be ready 15 minutes in advance, plus you need to allow some additional time for collecting tickets, pretty much the same as if we were leaving from Lymington.

There will be two groups. A medium paced group will do approx. 25 – 26 miles heading southwards to Ventnor before looping back to Godshill for a lunch stop after about 15 – 16 miles. The fast group will extend their journey with an eastwards loop around Culver Cliffs and the intention is to meet up at the pub for the lunch stop. Of course that may not be at precisely the same time but we do hope to share some time together during the lunch break.

The pub is the The Griffin Family Inn, High Street Godshill PO38 3JD and it has a large secure garden accessed off the car park. There will be a typical selection of snacks, carvery roasts, specials and regular menu items and the pub prides itself on its vegetarian options. Look it up on the web to view the menu.

Return ferries are at half past the hour and on the hour throughout the afternoon up to 6 p.m. after which they get a bit sporadic so if we miss a mid/late afternoon one, it will not be too long a wait for the next one, and thus our return time into Portsmouth will be sensible and reasonable depending on how long we take to do the return ride after the lunch stop.

Sunday 23 July 2017

BBQ – by kind invitation of Patrick &

Susan Summers

(ref SU 460 273)

Designated start point: provisionally, the car park of Olivers Battery Primary School, Austen Ave, Winchester SO22 4HP

The ride will start at the school car park (unless permission is denied when in that case, we will post details on the forum page) but the BBQ itself will be at Patrick and Susan's house a mere 100m distance from the school. To preserve Patrick and Susan's on-going privacy, the precise location of their house and garden will be made known to attendees on the day.

The format of the barbecue will be a £5 personal contribution per attendee, and Patrick and Susan will supply meat, fish, bread, salad, soft drinks. Bring your own booze, and because NewForce has a baking tradition, bring a dessert if

you are feeling creative and sharing.

The ride will most likely be around the Pitt, Farley, Tegdown, Flowerdown areas and farther afield and will take in a variety of good woodland and open downland tracks.

Sunday 06 August 2017 Godshill (ref SU 170150)

Designated pub: The Fighting Cocks at Godshill

Directions to the start point are to get to the Fighting Cocks pub at Godshill just east of Fordingbridge, and then follow the road to the side of the pub. It goes downhill and through a ford before climbing up the other side of the valley. The road twists sharply at the top of the hill and the car park is right at this location.

From here sensible choices are southwards towards Pitts Wood and Hampton Ridge, Hasely, Holly Hatch and Linwood or northwards through Godshill Inclosure, Hale, Bohemia, Lover and maybe up towards the Pepperbox or looping back eastwards via Bramshaw Telegraph.

**Sunday 20 August 2017 Wilton near Salisbury; South Street car park
- Day Ride (ref SU 094 308)**

Designated pub: Lunch stop during the day-ride

The start point is the car park next to the Michael Herbert Hall, South Street, Wilton, SP2 0JS

The plan is to head up Grovely Hill to the Roman road that runs through the woods at the top. The Roman road continues for approximately 4 miles and has a number of offshoots that can be explored. Half day riders could drop down to Teffont Magna or Dinton whilst those wanting a longer ride will be required to cross the A303 (with care) at Chilmark Down. From there, there is some good woodland singletrack that leads through to the continuation of the roman road which can then be re-joined. There are several routes north out of these woods that offer great views from the ridge before dropping down to Upton Lovell in the Wylde Valley where the Prince Leopold pub, set on the riverbank would make a good refreshment stop. The return would be similar to the route out but with a few deviations, notably taking a route to the south of Grovely woods that on some maps is marked as the Monarch's Way. For those reluctant to go straight home after the ride, Cobbs tearooms in the Wilton shopping village and the Greyhound pub are both within five minutes' walk of the car park.

Events Calendar

May 13th to 14th

Day and Night Enduro at Queen Elizabeth Country Park

As the name says there will be riding and timed sections in both the day and the night at this popular Hampshire mountain bike venue.

If you do go along you'd better leave early on the Sunday to get to the club anniversary barbecue.

May 14th

The Wilverly ride and barbecue will be the official celebration of our club's 25th anniversary.

Sunday 21 May 2017

Gorrick Hot MTB Challenge

HQ at Vernham Dean, Hants SP11 0JY

This is a non-competitive event with Medium, Long or Epic distance marked rides.

May 26th to 28th 2017

SSEC2017 will be held at Evanton in Scotland.

All detail have now been confirmed and at the time of writing there are still a few entries left. You won't even need a real singlespeed. Bikes can be converted for the weekend or just bodged with gaffer tape. That's how it was in Slovenia last year.

September 2017

SingleSpeed UK will be held up in the Lake District. This one's promised to be a 'back to basics' event with some riding, a party with plenty of beer and basic camping facilities ie, a tap in a field.

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. At the time of writing there is no word on quite what this event is.

New FORCe early years:

Part 3 – Adverse Access Swings

By martin Wheat

The club was formed on **30th April 1992** at a meeting in the Lyndhurst's Community Centre, as a lobby group in response to the Forestry Commission's (FC) edict that cycling be restricted to forest tracks only. Our difficulty with this was that the tracks are mostly intended for timber extraction so they go round in circles inside the plantations.

In early discussions, Charlie Smith presented the FC with link paths across varied terrain to give point-to-point routes, links with communities and old thoroughfares. Newsletter 6 in Spring '93 describes the permitting of a link from Bolderwood to Ocknell Plain via Mogshade Hill and the A31 underpass.

There was some exposure in the media: on 21st March '93 BBC2's 'Southern Eye' covered 40 of us leaving in four groups from Abbotswell, and interviewed our Access Officer, Charlie Smith. The perceived issue at the time was damage to the Forest surface, with surveys going back to 1964 describing the effect of horses, mostly from riding establishments.

Until July 1994 the permitted routes remained verbally described, with a voluntary agreement to stay on some 288 miles of gravel tracks, and then "as it was desirable to give a more welcoming approach to help cyclists navigate the Forest" the FC published a map marking some 212 miles of routes. As well as most of the gravel tracks inside the forestry enclosures, there were a number of links over open forest. The FC admitted that they'd published the maps to be ready for the summer season and without much consultation.

The Verderers were incensed. One, Anthony Pasmore had a regular "New Forest Notes" column in the Lymington Times and some quotations give a flavour.

In his August '94 column he wrote under the heading "Mountain Bike War", after a preamble about lack of consultation:

"The maps do three entirely separate things. Firstly, they show cyclists where to find the gravel roads on which for some time past they have been permitted to ride. Many in the Forest believe ... that the existing permission ought to be rescinded, but I suppose that this element of the maps is the least controversial. Secondly they include large scale plans of recommended routes, often

encouraging bikers to penetrate deeply into the most isolated and sensitive parts of the Inclosures which, until now have been small havens of peace in a sea of disturbance. This will be wholly unacceptable to anyone who values the remaining wilderness qualities of the Forest. Finally, and worst of all, they allocate an extensive network of new cycling routes over unmade paths on the Open Forest, many of them again in just about the last places to which recreation should be directed. Gross examples are at Rowbarrow near (Pig Bush and Beaulieu) and at Splash Bridge near Linwood. ... I estimate that there are at least seventeen miles of unsurfaced paths now brought into use on the Open Forest... .”

Following discussions, the FC published a revised network of some 146 miles for the 1995 season, a copy of which eludes me. It offered 20% less open Forest trail, removal of some dead ends, new routes intended to guide cyclists away from the open Forest and the threat of £500 maximum fine for transgression! Also in 1995 the FC created a “Recreational Users’ Advisory Committee” on which the club’s then chairman – Barry Collier (see the Obit: 2nd August in your Calendar)– sat with representatives of other user groups, Verderers, local government and conservation groups to find ways of satisfying their competing ambitions for the Forest.

This was a long way from satisfying the Verderers.

In February ‘95’s New Forest Notes, Pasmore rails –*“In the summer of 1994, with the problem completely out of hand, the Commission's actions were challenged, but to no evident affect. The New Forest bodies, accordingly decided to obtain counsel's opinion on the legality of what had been done. From the resulting document, it is abundantly clear that the Commission may not assign the Open Forest for mountain bikes routes without the consent of the Verderers.”*

In May, *“They (the FC) have chosen to ignore the Ministers direction that priority ... must be given to the conservation of the Forests character. They have also, in the view of almost all informed opinion in the Forest, broken the law.”*

And In October, *“The provision of one or two long distance routes, based on country lanes, and with some cross Forest links, is probably acceptable to all Forest interests. ... I fear the Forest is closer to being forced into litigation than at any other time since the great hardwood controversy of the 1960s. ... All hopes of avoiding conflict are now pinned on a further conference of Forest bodies with the Deputy Surveyor in the first week of November. If this fails, the prospects for an amicable settlement of the problem look remote.”*

This meeting between only the FC and the Verderers, reached agreement on a set of cycling routes to be permitted and they issued a Press Release on 16th January '96.

Pasmore again, in his January '96 New Forest Notes says "*Every compromise means yet more loss to the Forest's wilderness quality and character*"; that in the negotiation "*every inch of bike route was considered and most contested ... the end '95 deal is an unhappy encroachment deal but better than going to uncertain law*".

See the sketch map for what these 46 miles of permission meant.

Barry Collier had already got the implementation date delayed from Easter to July 1st when he wrote to club members. He pointed out the exclusion of routes between Fritham and Frogham, between Fritham and the Red Shoot Inn, most of the disused railway line west of Brockenhurst and much more, the disjointedness of the routes and their substantial sections on roads and the lunacy of the Holmsley campsite route of 11km included 8.5km of public road that passes through the summer traffic chaos that is Burley.

Members were invited to a meeting at the White Hart at Cadnam on 18th Jan. to plan a concerted course of action.

To be continued.









Above: Robin in the snow

Below: Jenn 'crossing' a rather big hill



Why cross?

By Jenn Forrester

The simple answer... I love off-road riding and I don't own a mountain bike. But,...in the time I've been riding with NewForce (about 2 years now), although I'd still really like something with suspension sometimes, it's not yet become a necessity. Keith asked me to write an article on what it's like to ride a cyclocross bike on the NewForce rides, so here goes. Maybe I'll even succeed in inspiring some of the club to give it a try?

It took me quite a while to brave an off-road ride with a new group of people. I'd had quite a few years off of the bike, so despite being confident that I could ride, my fitness wasn't what it had been and I was fearful of turning up on a bike that was considered inadequate for the job by many and then proceeding to hold everyone up. When I finally gave it a go, my fears were unfounded...I joined the Tikka ride and everyone was lovely (although the jokes about whether I'd put the wrong bike in the car inevitably were made).

My first ride went straight up hill from the waterworks at Twyford and I remember desperately hanging on to Andy's wheel hoping I'd make it to the top without being dropped. I did, just, but I soon discovered that these weren't like the road rides I used to go on. I wasn't the last to arrive at the junction at the top and when the last person did, there was no rushing off to find the next big hill to race up, there was some biking banter with a group of lovely people with a shared passion, and a bit of a discussion about the best route from there, giving those of us who were still catching our breath a chance to recover before the single track we'd all climbed up there for.

Of course, the best bit was still to come. What self-respecting ride would be complete without a decent beverage? Whilst downloading about the evening's entertainment in a good pub, there was some surprise and admiration for lycra-clad wannabe mountain biker on the totally inappropriate machine. I was hooked! After a while, and having been inspired to do more and more riding, I thought I might be able to try a Jalfrezi, but could I do it? The rides could be long, unpredictable, muddy,...more fun? Turns out that a year of Tikka rides (and some training on the road...there, I admit it) meant I could, in the most part.

But the bike, was it holding me back? Could I be having even more fun on a Thursday night? Well, cyclocross started in France (according to Wikipedia) as races from town to town across farmland, over wall, fences, on road; you just

had to take the route you thought was quickest, which meant running and carrying your bike for some of it. So, I guess rural France and rural Hampshire aren't so different really. The bike should be good!

It's light! Whichever cross bike you choose it is going to be much lighter weight than any mountain bike for the same cost. That matters! If you are going to drag it through muddy trails and over long distances, you can certainly improve matters by shaving a couple of bags of sugar off of the weight of your bike. Make the climbs easier, and you're in a better position to take full advantage on the technical stuff. And if you do get lost, need to heave your bike over a gate, or over a patch of brambles, I'd choose the cross bike any day.

And that really sticky mud in the winter; the cross bike has clearance (if you stick to the standard 32mm tyres). Whether it has more than some mountain bikes out there I don't know, but I'm not stopping to peel clods out of my bike any more often than anyone else. Another thing the cross bike earns respect for is ruts (there are quite a few on Hampshire's bridleways). To me the cross bike seems happy in a straight line and narrow tyres must help, although I'm told I'm wrong and a modern mountain bike will handle ruts better. I'll let you know when I try one (it's ordered)! The narrow bars have seen me squeeze easily between trees on single track and turn round in surprise when others have stopped to manoeuvre between posts.

There are, however, certain hazards; roots (aargh!), and those hard hoof prints as the paths dry up in spring. Oh, for the want of softer tyres and some cushioning! So, I have to hover over the saddle, and keep my wits about me... which has resulted in a couple of falls, but mainly a lot of excitement and stronger legs! I have, however, plumped for slightly improved comfort in the summer by riding with 40mm tyres. There are also those steep, but not ever so short, hills. It's not unusual to find myself in my lowest gear with nowhere to go, having to push-on hard or get off. We could argue that these are both good things. I'm getting fitter, stronger, and more skilful. It's not relaxing, but I guess that's the choice I'm writing about.

So, I still look like a 'roadie' on the wrong ride, and I think a bike with some suspension might be more suitable for the hard core down hills if I manage to join any of the Wales trips, but I love my cross bike, even more for the New-Force rides than for races. Oh, it does have disc brakes...I'm not that crazy!

Rat Race's "Coast-to-Coast" event – Sept 2016

A Participant's Story by Penni Harrison

Some of you may know that in Feb 2016, I bought a cyclo-cross bike (well technically I 'hired' it from a finance company, but that's not important). You may also know that I acquired this new bike purely because I had entered Rat Race's epic Coast-to-Coast race in Sept 2016, and according to 'those in the know' a CX bike was the perfect choice for this mixed discipline adventurous challenge.

Coast-to-Coast is a 105 mile race roughly along the fault line in Scotland from Nairn (home of oatcakes) on the east coast, to Fort William (home of quality slate....not to be confused with oatcakes) on the west coast. The race would consist of trail running, road cycling, off-road cycling, and kayaking. Now I'm an okay runner (I have two legs) and an okay cyclist (I have a bicycle), and as for kayaking, well, how hard could that be to someone who swings kettlebells for a living? This event had my name written all over it, all I had to do was decide which category to enter. The "Experts" would tackle the entire route in one day. The "Challengers" would compete over two days with a mid-way overnight rest. I liked the sound of an overnight rest.

So, I trained hard all summer. Every time I went out for a bike ride, I did a run either immediately before or after. Every time I went for a run, I did a bike ride either before or after. (Okay, so they're the same thing, but saying it both ways sounds really impressive don't you think?)

I rode the CX a lot to get a feel for it in all terrains and found it hugely capable, fast, and very fun (and easy to clean, oh happy days). The only downside to the CX bike was temporary loss of vision during very bumpy fast descents, oh, and blisters on my hands from gripping the skittish front end too hard. But who doesn't like a blind-folded ride on a bucking bronco every so often.....?

Considering I don't have a kayak, nor live near any water, I was pleased to get some decent kayaking training in too, in Wales and Weymouth....where there's a will there's a way. (Too many W's there?)

As part of my prep, I also became a vegan. I had read a few books about the world's best endurance athletes and most of them put their super-human powers and ability to recover from relentless hard training down to them being vegan. After some Google-based research into veganism I was chuffed to find that I was almost guaranteed to live longer (if I dodge the proverbial bus) and healthier

than non-vegans, hence I signed up and waved goodbye to all animal products.

So, the training and race prep went well, the CX bike was a joy, I was injury-free and raring to go. Everything was going to plan. On 9th Sept, Paul and I drove to Nairn, I collected my race pack and then racked the CX bike in the transition area at Cawdor Castle. The race would start on foot the next morning.....

The morning of 10th was chilly, dry and bright and I crossed the start line full of excitement. It was a beautiful 7 mile trail run from Nairn to Cawdor Castle during which I accidentally overtook everyone in my start wave (and some from an earlier start wave) apart from 3 chaps, oh happy days! On arrival at the Cawdor transition area, I did a quick shoe change, threw my helmet and Camelbak on and leapt on the CX for the 48 mile road ride to Fort Augustus. Everything was going to plan. Before long I was whizzing past people in an earlier start wave who were on mountain bikes and chasing everyone who wasn't. My CX had slick road tyres on and it flew. The 29'er mtb's were noticeably faster on the road than the smaller wheeled mtb's, but still no match for CX bikes which were definitely the dog's doo dahs.

Before long there was one helluva ferocious head wind. I did what anyone else would have done....hunkered down behind a big bloke and kept quiet. Eventually he noticed me and 'invited' me to return the favour. I took my turn on the front, but somehow, quite carelessly, I lost him. Everything was going to plan.

Well, sort of. I had snot issues. My nose was running. Like a tap, but it wasn't water. After the nose-wipe on my gloves had reached saturation capacity, and I had dismally failed to avoid my shoulders during a couple of single-nostril 'blow-outs', I decided to give up. I let it run. It was everywhere, including going in my mouth. I justified this scenario by figuring the salt content would be good for my electrolyte balance.

At about 38 miles I was beginning to ache and feel a bit low and lonely. I had an energy bar. Then I saw a vision from heaven, a disciple, Paul. He had parked en-route, was 'faffing' in the boot, digging out a camera, not expecting me for another few minutes/hours. I shouted and waved as I whizzed past, surprising him. When he realised he'd missed the photo opportunity, his face was like the Baldy Man in the photo-booth in the Hamlet Cigar advert.

Soon after, Paul drove alongside me for a short while and we exchanged words, but he wouldn't let me grab hold for a tow (not that the idea had crossed my mind of course). It was so nice to see him, and when he eventually drove off ahead, I felt awesome and so alive, boosted (although that may have been due to the energy bar I ate just beforehand, I can't be sure). I knew he would stop

further ahead and that gave me something to look forward to. I needed to get the snot off my top lip/chin/chest/shoulders in case he had a camera.

There was a monster hill as we approached Fort Augustus. It was a gradual 4 mile climb followed by an evil steep kick-up at the end. I saw the steep bit approaching ahead, and hardly anyone was riding it. Some of you may know that I like a good hill so I dug deep and grunted up it, determined not to get off. I reached the top just moments before I was due to pass out and fall off. That was the only time I really missed a granny ring. Of course, Paul was at the top, and so was the official event photographer. Full points for spotting Paul in the background of my race photo. I think I got away with the snot issue.

I whooped with joy on the first descent into Fort Augustus, it was thrilling. I was absolutely flying, and had no fear (I was racing after-all.....I don't do 'cautious' or 'scared' when I'm wearing a timing chip). Everything was going to plan, I was a very happy bunny. Then, during the second fast descent I hit a shallow bump VERY hard, and the back end starting weaving about. "Oh fuckity bum, I've punctured". "NO, please NO". What a bummer, I couldn't believe it. I braked, both hands, steadily slowing the CX, the wobbling continued as I slowed, and then the inevitable happened....someone passed me. She hollered something, but all I could do was ask if I was punctured at the back..... she kindly slowed up and reported that everything looked just fine. WHAT??? No puncture??? She was right and by now (snail's pace) the wobbling had stopped. Phew! My race was back on, but I couldn't speed off and leave her, so we rode together for the last mile to the transition area in Fort Augustus. I didn't get her name, nor a look at her face. She would later turn out to be my saviour once again.

I sped into the transition area, leapt off the CX, dumped my helmet/Camelbak, changed into trainers and ran (wobbled) to the kayaking section, about a mile away....on Loch Ness. I donned a monster-proof life-jacket and ran carefree and knee-deep into Nessie's front room. Race marshalls thrust me into a waiting (double) kayak already half occupied. I grabbed the paddle and shouted behind me to my kayaking partner "you done this before?" "Yes" she said "I'm an ex-world champion", (well, those were the words I thought I heard). With little experience in a kayak, I went all-out from the word GO setting a ludicrous stroke-rate for my partner to keep up with. Obviously I faded fairly quickly, but the engine in the back seat carried on at full-steam. Over the 1 mile course, we straight-lined it with a bow-wave past a dozen zig-zaggers and beached our kayak on the shoreline by about 10 feet (or so it felt). I leapt out, shook the hand of the 'engine', thanked her enormously (and genuinely) and ran off.....whilst she dried her bare feet and put her socks and shoes back on. A mile later, I

crossed the finish line of Coast-to-Coast Day 1 absolutely pooped, everything felt like jelly, and I was raw with emotion. Paul was nowhere to be seen.

At this point, I remember being very relieved that I wasn't competing in the 'Expert' categorydoing the entire 105 miles in one day. I was in no fit state to get straight back on the bike for 20 miles off-road, 16 on-road, then a tough 14 mile trail run, and more kayaking. As it so happened, neither was the lady who had told me I wasn't punctured, the same lady it turned out that had helped me achieve the second fastest kayaking time in the whole competition....yes, she was the same person, competing in the over 50's 'expert' category. She pulled out of the race after our kayaking leg in Fort Augustus, citing the head-wind during the road-cycle leg as the straw that broke the camel's back. (Hope it wasn't actually my fault....perhaps I finished her off in the kayak...uh oh.)

Re-united with Paul, and on the way back to the car with depleted will-power and cravings for salt, I had a momentary lapse of veganism and ate the most delicious take-away fish and chips ever. Please don't tell anyone.

Whilst I sat in the car resting, Paul went about changing the tyres on my CX to some knobbies. He did a grand job and took his role as 'support team' very seriously. I replenished my tri-bag and then took my bike and racked it in the compound in Fort Augustus ready for the start of Day 2....off-road. Everything was going to plan.

That night, we didn't take advantage of the free competitor's campsite in Fort Augustus. I had us booked into a nice hotel a few miles away to ensure I got a really good night's sleep. Just before bedtime, I found out that I was the leading lady at the end of Day 1, seriously?!? How exciting!! I didn't sleep a wink.

Thankfully a very well planned and conscientious (read 'anal') recovery strategy and a lovely leg massage from my dedicated support team at the end of Day 1 meant that despite not sleeping, I would start Day 2 feeling like a new woman.

Day 2 did not start brilliantly, I failed the mandatory kit check on the start line (okay, I was trying it on....you all know I like to travel light). Once rectified, I started in a later wave than I wanted. After a few miles of canal towpath came the single-track and a queue of people pushing bikes up the first steep, narrow, hill. I couldn't beat them, so I joined them. Back on my steed at the top I had no choice but to stay in line, single-track is, after-all SINGLE track. Eventually, out of the throng, I got to test my skills, nerves and the CX on some real tricky technical stuff which I would have relished on my mountie. It was thankfully short and I popped out at the bottom of the slippery, loose, rocky, steep, tight, switchback section with quivering legs and sweaty palms – it brought back memories of Bike Park Wales just two weeks earlier (as well as a few decent

bucking bronco rides....but I'll save those stories for another day). After that, I just bombed along the miles of loose gravelly fire-roads like a woman possessed, thrashing the pants off everyone in sight....even blokes on CX bikes were eating my dust (shingle), oh happy days. Everything was going to plan.

Later, on a road section, a guy over-took me on a hybrid. I was a bit miffed, but didn't make a fuss. Just as he passed me, he changed gear, badly. His chain caught, his feet got ejected off the pedals, and he landed astride the top tube. He squealed like a girl, and then had to shuffle with both feet on the ground until the bike came to a halt. It all happened in a nano-second. I cruised past him shouting "You okay mate?", he didn't answer and I never saw him again. Afterwards I found myself wondering if he'd hurt his goolies.

After 36 varied miles on the CX, transition to foot in Fort William was emotional. Paul watched over me from a distance as I left my bike for the last time, donned trainers and set off for the arduous trail run along the West Highland Way. I would see nothing familiar until the finish line 15 miles away, I felt lonely already.

For the first mile of running after cycling, one's legs feel like they are being operated by A. N. Other who has drunk too much, so I was thrilled that Paul got some photos of me at this point.

As far as I could tell, I left the Fort William transition area ahead of the opposition, and I intended to stay that way. We were quickly off-road and up in the mountains on the West Highland Way where I adopted a strategy of running everything except steep inclines which I would power-march to conserve energy. I power-marched a fair bit. I also decided to eat and drink only when



power-marching, not running. Hence I ate and drank a fair bit.

The path was tricky and treacherous and some sections so steep that clambering was in order, but on the whole it was an awesome route and I felt privileged to be running it without injury and in good weather. I felt quite alone and concentrated on every footfall so as not to trip or slip or turn an ankle. There were loads of walkers going the opposite way, they stood aside and cheered and clapped me....geez that made me feel fab and gave me such a boost. I occasionally overtook some other Coast-to-Coast competitors and was vaguely aware that I might actually be doing pretty well in the race. Everything was going to plan.



I'd love to be able to report on the scenery and the wildlife, but I was 'in the zone' and noticed nothing except the tricky terrain under my feet. Yeah, I know, what a waste of a blooming long drive to a stunning country. I did of course notice the official event photographer (or was it his long lens?) laying prone in a bivvy about 8 miles along the West Highland Way, so I perked up, did an energetic-looking 'vanity run', smiled and waved. I was quite pleased with the resulting photo.

About a mile from the end of the run, a lanky sure-footed mountain goat of a runner overtook me, we exchanged pleasantries and he told me that the kayaking leg had been cancelled (wind issues), and the run route extended to 'compensate'. Oh deep joy. I wondered where he was stowing his crystal ball.

Sure enough, the mileage on my Garmin had gone beyond the expected finish mileage, and I was still up a mountain. The newly added descent into Ballacullish was potentially ankle-breaking, and I was super-cautious....not wanting to get this far and then need an air ambulance. I expected to see the lanky mountain-goat lying on the side of the trail with a broken leg, but didn't, thank goodness. I eventually popped out of the West Highland Way onto a road to cheers from a crowd and marshalls directing me to the finish line (out of sight at this point). I was quite choked, and determined to finish strong, I gave it

some welly only to find that “you’re nearly there” actually meant “another mile or so”. Needless to say, the wellying didn’t last to the finish line. Anyway, I crossed the line running and looking ‘strong’. According to Paul that was a rare sight.

Everyone cheered and clapped as I was the first woman to finish, it was an amazing, awesome, proud feeling. Obviously I fell into Paul’s arms and cried like a baby. Thankfully this moment was not caught on camera.

So, the final result. Out of around 850 participants in the “Challenger” category, I was 16th overall, beaten by some Scandinavian Vikings it turned out (damn foreigners). I was 1st of all the females in a total time of 10.5 hours, an hour ahead of the 2nd placed

lady. Everything had gone according to plan.

Without a doubt, the winning formula was the CX bike (Giant’s carbon offering for women, the Liv Invite CoMax) my OCD planning, thorough training, an effective mid-way recovery strategy, and superb support from my devoted hubby Paul. And possibly being a vegan.

I can highly recommend Coast-to-Coast, organised by Rat Race if you are looking for a challenging event to train for in 2017.....or if you just need an excuse to buy a cyclo-cross bike. (Which it seems not everyone does.....two of my best friends in Newforce have just bought CX bikes and as far as I know they’re not training for next year’s Coast-to-Coast!).



Four Blokes, A Road Trip and Snow

By Robin Knight

Fatbikes have been around a while now, originally designed in Alaska, their popularity hit a new high in our fair weathered country a couple of years ago. The Vindaloo riders embraced their girth early on, and have ridden them in various locations ever since. Except in snow. The downside of living in the warm and sunny South.

At the end of summer 2016, over a pint, four of us were bemoaning the fact we had never ridden a fatbike on snow, so we decided we would in the following winter. This idea quickly became a plan.

Fatbiker's have a strange desire to show off their machines, there are a couple of well populated Facebook groups, and an on-line magazine. It was the latter who announced, just a couple of weeks after our initial discussion, they were to hold a winter camp in the Jura Mountains, about 60km from Geneva in late January. Allan, Ashley, Pikey and I quickly signed up and sent a load of money to a chap called Gairy, who we only knew from the internet....! It turned out he was good to his word and booked accommodation in the quiet town of Morez. Several weeks later we were off.

We all have limited time off from work, so looked at the most economical way we could get 4 days riding. We decided we would drive down, it was only 650 miles each way. And to save time away from work, we would travel overnight! Leaving Southampton around 9pm on the Thursday night after all of us had been at work all day. We had booked onto a 1am Eurotunnel train. On the other side it was just 500 miles to our destination. We loaded 3 fatbikes and all our gear into my small van, and popped 2 (wrapped in a tarp!) on a rack on the back, and yes, we took a spare bike just in case! By some small miracle it all fitted, along with the four of us!

Sleep in a van travelling at 70mph through a freezing cold night was not the easiest, nor was driving for hours in temperatures around minus 5, on deserted French motorways. We all took it in vaguely pre-arranged intervals to drive, with changeovers kept to the absolute minimum, sometimes resembling driver changes in the Le Mans 24 hour race! As the sun rose on the Friday morning we were within touching distance of



Morez, but in need of some food, coffee and stretch of the legs. McDonalds seemed the obvious choice! Unlike back here in Blighty, they don't offer a breakfast menu, so I ended up with a Big Mac meal. A bit strange, but needed sustenance all the same!

By 10am we were pulling into our hotel car park, excited as four not very grown up blokes could be! We were met by Gairy, who was just about to head off for a ride with two chaps from up north and a bloke from Belgium (and his dog!). A few more were due to arrive later in the day. We quickly unloaded and dragged our kit to the top floor of the hotel, changed and went off following vague instructions on where Gairy was heading. We found it after a while of driving in circles over the French / Swiss border. Snow time at last!

It only took about 3 minutes till we stopped for the first picture. Riding along a wide, groomed snow track, we were all grinning like Cheshire cat's! At this first impromptu stop the early riders suddenly turned up! Gairy suggested we head up this trail a bit and take a snow shoe trail off to the right. We duly followed. We soon discovered the joy of these narrow walking trails. Not much wider than our tyres, with knee deep soft powder each side, one little slip and you were off. At low speed that meant sideways into the snow, anything above a crawl shot you over the bars! Luckily the soft snow cushioned the hundreds of falls we laughed about all weekend!

This first trail led to a slightly wider, snow covered, twisty, fun, fast, woodland descent that popped us out to the most fantastic view. Looking directly north over Lake Geneva to Mont Blanc and the surrounding Alps. A stunning view. From here we dropped to a small town in Switzerland, and a bar called Cheese 'n' Beef. This where Allan fell foul of not reading the menu before ordering a Fondue! Fifty Euro's was a bit steep J

A few more trails, and hills, and we were back at the cars, and then soon back at the hotel. Gairy had booked a table in the town for dinner. We first met in a bar, along with the last of the weekend group. Two chaps from Basel in Switzerland and two from Les Deux Alpes in the French Alps. All of us English (except Steven and his dog from Belgium!).

The meal was lovely, as was the company and the booze – it seems all fatbikers like a drink or 3!

The morning soon came round, and we all loaded up and drove off to another starting location. Lots more snow shoe trails, falling off, photos, laughter, and a fair amount of pushing bikes up steep, soft, narrow, snow covered trails to find they just disappear, followed by downhills, falling off, laughter and more pictures!



That evening I missed a message about the restaurant booked a few miles from town, so the four of us went to find something in Morez. It was shut. The whole town. Every restaurant, every bar. I eventually found two young ladies waiting on a street corner and struck up a conversation in my Pidgeon French. They were waiting for a lift to the next town, one that stayed open at the weekend, but alerted us to a pizza takeaway, the only place to get food at the weekend in the now named Borez!

Sunday was a repeat of Saturday, but in a different location, with a lunchtime transfer to a different area. We were to visit the woodland trail that popped us out to the stunning view across Lake Geneva to Mont Blanc again. Well worth the second visit. As per the previous days, there were plenty of incidents, plenty of snow, plenty of sunshine and pleasant warm temperatures (for a snow-sports resort!).

Sunday evening took us to an all can eat Chinese buffet in a nearby town, followed by far too much fantastic Belgium beer transported all the way from Belgium (sorry Steven!). Monday, everyone else headed off first thing, we had our return tunnel booked for 1am Tuesday morning, so we would arrive home in time to go to work, so we headed out on the bikes again. A fourth day of fun in the snow. By about 2pm, the weather was beginning to turn, so we headed back to the van and loaded up to begin the return leg of our road trip.

French roads are a delight to travel on. Five hundred miles back to the euro tunnel terminal, not a single set of roadworks, no traffic jams, no hold ups of any sort! We made excellent time, arriving at the tunnel several hours ahead of schedule. After paying a surcharge, we embarked a much earlier train, and arrived home just 11 hours after departing the fabulous Jura Mountains. Roll on 2018, We'll be back!



££ Club Discounts ££

The following shops offer a discount on presentation
of your membership card:

Cycle Experience www.cyclex.co.uk

Brookley Road, Brockenhurst tel: 01590 624204

179 Barrack Road, Christchurch tel: 01202 486278

10-20 South Street, Hythe tel: 02380 840765

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

Reader's Bikes

Keith's Surly 1x1

I've owned this bike for over 10 years now, as I have most of the bikes I ride regularly. I guess that means that sometime around 2006-7 I finally got to grips with what I really like in a bike although I can't that it hasn't gone through a number of incarnations before being built up as it is today. As with my other off-roaders stems have got shorter and handlebars wider and most significantly the wheels and tyres have got fatter, transforming it from the 'Winter Snot Bike' where it's sole purpose was to save wear and tear on the summer bikes through the wetter months, into a damned fine bike capable of eating up the trails all year round.

As the name suggests, the 1x1 is sold by Surly solely as a singlespeed with no mech hanger or cable routing for gears. Originally launched in 1998 as the Rat Ride 1x1 it is still, in these days of 29 and 27.5 inch malarky, listed in Surly's line up and still intended for 26 inch rims. Although as Surly will tell you there's so much mud clearance that you'll have no problems fitting regular 27.5 knobbies or even 700c cyclo-cross wheels. Just don't try gears. There's people out there who'd lynch you for that.

I bought mine sometime in early 2007. Or was it 2006? Whatever, It doesn't matter enough for me to dig through a mountain of invoices to find out for sure. The winter bike I'd been running prior to that, an Orange Clockwork had cracked terminally and the 1x1 seemed to be the closest option in terms of frame geometry. Surly sell them as frame and fork only so I built it up with as many parts from the Clockwork as would fit and went for the cheapest reliable (or so I thought at the time) options for everything else.

Once built I got on and rode it. It did a highly admirable but unremarkable job of allowing me not to trash the nice bikes when everything was wet and sloppy, but as soon as the trails dried out it would be at the back of the shed until the winter filth arrived again. Even for the singlespeed events I went to it stayed in the shed with my Dean being converted in preference. A few bits wore out and got changed. The Magura brakes became 'Shaguras' after the levers proved unreliable and were replaced with Shimano ones. The skinny Mavic rims were replaced by some Halo freeride items, partly because they were wider but mostly because they were a very bright blue and I wanted to see what the 'abuse generator circuits' in the Vindy's minds would come up with when they saw them. I sort of kidded myself that being a light rider they would be wide enough to give me a semblance of the float of a fatbike and I half believed it until I tried to do a beach ride with the Fatties. Fool. And still on dry trails the Surly was a rattly old slug.

In early 2016 however, I did the job properly. I found some 48mm wide trials rims at a reasonable price and some hubs on clearance, singlespeed specific too! And that was the set-up that transformed the bike. Suddenly I wanted to ride it everywhere, wet, dry, bumpy or smooth. It just worked so much better with the wider rims allowing lower tyre pressures for more give over the rattly stuff and genuine float through the soft bits. Then some carbon bars from FSA turned up in a sale and XT brakes were on a promotion. Finally the Surly importer put Surly's own 50mm rims on the clearance list. Gold ones included! Ooh, ooh ooh. I don't know who in their right mind would have paid the rrp of £150 each for them but the price they were offered at was too good for me to refuse. After all that I felt obliged to replace the old, battered and several times glued back together saddle.

And that's the spec it's in today. After ten or so years is it finally finished? The answer to that is 'yes'. For now.



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.

