

SPAM NEWSLETTER

September 2011

For members of the Salisbury Plain Area Mountain Bike Club

Meeting Report:

Wow! A busy club meeting this month with quite a lively discussion and I got some proper minutes from the club secretary.

Club Rides

Paul Fisher, our ride co-ordinator, raised the issue of club rides; recently there has been a dearth of published organised club rides. Much lively discussion ensued and it turns out that many club members are riding race events on their own or in small groups; some of this ride activity is being published in the "Live Rides" section of the web site.

The following is my take on the meeting, so if you think I have misrepresented your views, unlucky! Send a complaint to the editor, have your say on the forum or better still, write your own article for the October newsletter.

The general view was that there is nothing wrong with club members doing their own riding or in small groups.

Paul has, for some time, found it difficult to get club members to commit to leading organised rides and for those rides that have taken place attendance has been variable.

The main issue discussed was the website and its inflexibility in enabling club members to view and post rides. Other club web sites were discussed and there was strong agreement for some form of easily accessible ride calendar. Other issues with the website were discussed and it was agreed that an update was required. Martin Charlesworth volunteered to investigate how best to change the website to more suit our needs.

Another idea that has been bubbling along in the forum is of a regular ride meeting point and start time; this was seen as a good idea and it was agreed to give it a go. Commencing soon,

there will be a ride starting from the Churchill Pub every other Sunday morning and a night ride from Fussell Wadman, Devizes every Thursday evening. Check out website "Club Rides" for more details.

Beer and Sandwiches

The next club night, 11 Oct, will be the SPAMBiking AGM and all club members are encouraged to attend. As usual, the club committee posts will be up for grabs. Please consider applying (many club members do it at least once) for one of the posts; none of them take up much extra time and the club cannot function without them. Posts available will be: Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, Ride Co-ordinator, Events Co-ordinator and Publicity. If you are thinking of standing and require any further info, please contact me or any of the committee.

Membership Reminder

All club memberships will be up for renewal on the 1st Oct. The meeting decided that membership fees will remain unchanged at £20 - one year's membership to a cracking MBR club and CTC 3rd party insurance; excellent value!

Winter Challenge

The winter Challenge has been organised for the 18th December; it's early this year because the Sunday following Christmas is New Years Day. Posters and entry forms for distribution will be available at the AGM. Martin, our Webmeister, has set up a microsite at www.spamwinterchallenge.co.uk.

RIDE CALENDAR

Sat 24th Sept *Isle of Purbeck – meet at Corfe Castle – Simon Smedley (Medium)*

No other rides scheduled – please come forward – your club needs you!

All rides start at 9:30am unless otherwise specified – see website for more details)

Next meeting: Tuesday 11th October - The Churchill, West Lavington

Ride Review: 1

Exmoor Beacons 21st August by Dave Robinson.

I have ridden in Emoor with Phil Miles quite a few times, but we never seemed to have the time to visit the two beacons on one trip. He also insists on riding one of Englands toughest climbs. This time Nigel Sadd had planned a route variation that would take us up to Dunkery Beacon but then descend on this infamous track.

Start was as usual in Dunster and the initial climb is a fairly constant grade. You are soon rewarded with good views over the Bristol Channel and beyond. A fast rocky drop to Wooton Courtenay and then narrow roads and farm tracks along Spangate Lane to Dunkery Errish. Moorland climb up to the road and on to Dunkery Hill and Beacon (at 520m height). This climb is only 200m height gained, against 300m using the 'normal' route, over similar distance.



Ken Snook eyeing up the purple heather

From Dunkery Beacon we descended rapidly over bumpy rocks down a twisty track that was quite exciting. Once at the bottom we were generally amazed that people (including us) have actually rode up that!

Along Dunster path and through woody trails to the village of Horner for tea stop. Sat outside in sunshine – amazing with the usual summer weather we have been having!



Devon cream tea anyone?

Now to find our way to Selworthy Beacon. This is on the hill next to the coast and is reached via a ford (or humpback bridge) in Allerford – spot height 25m; then a gentle although increasing steep continuous climb all the

way to the beacon at 300m.

Resting at the top we met a group of leisure cyclist who had ridden up from Minehead and didn't have one working pump between. What they did have was a soft tyre. Up steps Nigel Brown and does the manly thing (did I say it was a womans bike?) and gets the tyre hard again.



Nigel not coping too well with the heat.

The route back down to Minehead follows the South West Coast Path (bridleway so that's OK). For some reason we failed to get on the correct path at the start – still thinking about those ladies perhaps. Eventually we were on track and were soon speeding along when oops, rider down. Nigel B had got some air over a small bank on the track. The taking off was just fine, but the landing was on a slight off-camber loose soil bank and the bike wiped out from under him.

A few scratches and sore shoulder (and dented pride) were soon ignored and we were back on track. Nigel must have got over any fears as he rapidly dissappeared from view.

Steep tarmac in the town of Minehead led to a seafront leisurely cycle. We then stayed on the roadside cycle path 3 miles back to Dunster and the carpark.

Not too sure whether this route would suit Phil as we missed out one of his favourite tracks – Hawks Combe, but for me it was a great day out in sunshine. 26 miles & 1050m climbing.

Ride Review: 2

Brecon Beast 11th September by Dave Robinson.

I have been doing a fair amount of riding this last few months and was thinking that I might be getting fit enough to enter our winter challenge.

But... someone told about this event called the Brecon Beast that would use lots of trails quite familer to me and had a short route option. So I went on the website and signed up.

There was some forum talk about the short route being for girls. That's fine I thought, girls and recovering pelvic riders should be a good match. It was only on further thought that I gradually realised what I had let myself in

for. This 'short' route was 60km, that's nearly 40 miles in old money and over the Welsh hills to boot!

Pre-entering is good as an incentive and I did quite a few long distance local rides with many hills that Wiltshire offers, but would that be good enough for Wales?



On the day I planned to ride solo and at a very steady pace, this was helped by starting almost at the back of the pack and just accepting the pace around me and not try a push through.

The first 6 miles were all on tarmac ending in quite a steep hill that had many riders walking. I stayed in the saddle and overtook lots of others, who needing the odd shout of 'rider coming through' as the road was narrow and the walkers taking up all the room. Once at the top of this hill I wondered whether the struggle was worth it. As far as I could see up the first off-road singletrack was packed with stationary bikers. No-one could go anywhere!



It was some minutes before I was able to even take a step and join this throng and many minutes more of hill walking before being able to try riding; there was just too

many riders for the terrain.

At the top we were back to riding and the challenge was staying in a narrow muddy gully. I say muddy, but it was more like riding in thick soup. It didn't stick to the bike but was very slippery if you got off line – which I did several times. Once I tried to put a foot down only to discover that there was no ground to stand on. I had been concentrating on the gully and hadn't seen the drop to my right. A tumble down through branches, with people asking 'are you alright' I will be I replied once I've managed to stop tumbling!

Two St.Johns marshalls appeared from out of nowhere and with them pushing and a fellow rider pulling I managed to get back on to the track, although even more suspicious of my ability to ride this soupy gully stuff.

Good views over Llangorse Lake and swopping grassy hill top trails led to steep rocky descent to the first water stop.

From here it was a quick spin down to Talybont-On-Usk and then to follow the old railway track up to the Talybont reservoir. Cross over to west side and then onto a steep and long climbing fire road. I overtook lots of riders up this trail adopting a low gear and spinning legs (not my normal style), which I found very effective. Here we split from the long (100km) route and turned down a muddy gully with fast flowing water down the middle – I didn't cope too well with this either!

Another long climb on wide track led once again to some of those soupy gulleys where I had to walk to avoid simply sliding off every few yards. After only 200m or so I was back riding

It seemed a long way until the second water stop, found at the top of a steady smooth gravel climb – again I overtook walkers who just seemed too tired to try riding – it wasn't very steep just long and steady.

A nasty (to me) rough section just past the water stop led to the long climb up to the famous Brecon Beacons gap. I didn't see too many walkers here but some riders were going very slowly, who I once again passed fairly easily. There were lots of people stopped at the top (admiring the view?), but I decided the best thing was to just keep going and almost made my way over the 'improved' track without stopping – just one dab.

It was drizzling now and the track was very wet and looked to be slippery so I took the descent quite slowly, with very few riders coming by, I guess others were doing the same. Not Phil Miles though – he stormed by with a cheerful call over his shoulder.

At the bottom the route took in narrow tarmac lanes and then an overhead closed-in wide farm track with plenty of roots to keep my attention. My problem here was that I should have stopped earlier and cleaned my glasses as under the shade I couldn't tell a shadow from a root – until I went over it! I found the best thing was to just let the bike

go with the flow and hope for the best.

Once back in the town the route planners had a slight sting in the tail and made us climb a road hill before turning into the finishing field.

I felt quite pleased with my result 5-1/2 hours until I found out that Nigel Brown had finished an hour before me and he had done the full route! Still I was in the top half of the short route finishers and felt my fitness and ride tactics were spot on for this event.



There was a good turnout of SPAMbiking club members for this event. Paul Connell and I on the short route with Nigel Brown, Nigel Sadd, Ken Snook, Martin Disney, David Janes & Phil Miles on the long route.

It wasn't a race but... according to the results published Nigel Brown was second in his age group and 9th overall. This was despite a disagreement he had with a bridge post, resulting in a cracked helmet!

Other rides I've heard about:

From the SPAMbiking forum I've read that club members took part in the recent Torq 12 ride and the 100 mile Keilder ride, where apparently they had had the worst

conditions of this event ever and only 180 out of 600 starters finished. Two club members Chris Nobel & Pete Williams both on singlespeed should be congratulated on being among those that did finish. My hat off to you both.

SPAMbiking Winter Challenge

As you should all be aware now the Winter Challenge will be held this year before Xmas on the 18th December. Entry is open and all club members get a discount fee of £10 so please enter and support this major club annual event.

And finally...

Sorry all the ride news is about me but unfortunately you all seem to be out riding and haven't got any time to sit down and write. That is my clumsy way of saying would you please try and contribute to this newsletter. Thank you (Ed.)

Always wear a helmet on all club rides - mountain biking can be dangerous as well as fun.

Send ride reports and stories with small photos to dave@chitterne.com - thank you