



**PATEBIKES
GET THE KNOW
HOW**

**SNOWDON -
THE BEAUTIFUL
ADVENTURE**

**GUIDE GUIDE -
SWINLEY FOREST**

**REVIEW -
BELL STOKER
HELMET**

ISSUE #ONE



A Real Mountain

Biking Magazine



WELCOME TO



"Hi there, my name is George Hoey. I am by no means the most perfect rider or one of the most experienced. One thing I am though is passionate and I have found an unconditional love for Mountainbiking as a sport, hobby and discipline of cycling. I started Beacon MTB in the hope of helping everyday people like me share their experiences and knowledge with the world and connect those contributors with other riders. I hope you enjoy reading these articles as much as I did and hopefully one day you yourself might feel inspired to share your experience with us. Welcome to issue one." - Editor

Cover photo by Sarah Jewell.

Sarah is a photographer from the isle of man who is training for the Island games MTB team. You can follow Sarah on Twitter:

@SairJewell



Alan gets all of his pictures with his GoPro and timed traps.



Billy No Mates

Alan Storer

I usually ride alone. I quite like it. I'll stick some tunes on the iPod and just quietly crank out the miles. My local cross-country loop is about 22 miles long and largely devoid of elevation. This is the major downside of being a mountain biker living in the Fens, or The Great Flatness as I like to call it. I used to work shifts, and as such, got used to mid-week rides with no-one but myself for company, be it on the local loop, or trips further afield. It meant I could go at my own pace, take little detours whenever I fancied, or cut a ride short if I just wasn't feeling it. Usually this works for me – there's little chance of me breaking myself, other than a short but involving riverside singletrack section where a misplaced wheel could result in me taking an impromptu swim.

Then I discovered the joys of uplift-assisted riding at BikePark Wales. The main downside of being a Billy No-Mates is that I usually have to ride within myself. If I get it wrong, there's no-one to drive me home, and so I usually stick to



the Blue runs at BPW, with the occasional foray onto the red-rated but relatively benign Locomotion. I'd love to hit the Reds, but with their associated risk, it's not a gamble I'm usually willing to take.

Being a sociable sort, I will quite happily chat to all and sundry in the queue and on the bus, and will often tag myself on to the back of a line of riders if they're dropping down a trail I like the look of. One warm, sunny August afternoon, I attached myself to a couple of riders I had been chatting with and explained why I was sticking to the Blues, despite having 8-odd inches of travel front and rear, and a full-facer.

"That's OK," they said, "We've seen you ride, you'll be fine down Vicious Valley – that's where we're going. Tag along if you want!"

"Thanks, don't mind if I do." So I followed them down, and found it well within my capabilities, and quite fun (although I wouldn't want to ride it in the wet). So we hit it again. That's when it went wrong. Not for me, mind, although there were a couple of hairy moments, but for the lovely lady that followed me through the tunnel, or didn't. There was a bang, a sickening crack, and then her foot was pointing the wrong way. I went for help – I've never ridden Bushwhacker so quickly – the staff were brilliant, while a gaggle of riders looked after my fallen comrade and got her to the uplift road to flag down a passing minibus.

After an interminable wait for an Ambulance the decision was made to drive to A & E. I didn't hear from them again, but Karen, if you're reading this, I hope you've recovered, and it hasn't put you



off mountain biking, or adopting random solo riders on uplift buses. It did however, reinforce my belief that if you're on your own it's advisable to dial it back a notch. If that had happened to me on one of my usual solo runs, it could've been a while before anyone else came along to scrape me up.

For everyone else reading this, if you see a short, fat balding beardy guy on his tod at the trail head, give him a wide berth. It might just be me—Alan

Alan is a regular biker who is currently living in exile. Apparently the Welsh didn't want him there or something. You can find him on Twitter @feralmarmot



*Who knows where it
could take you... That's
the point.*



THE HOME MECHANIC

I love fixing and building bikes in the garage, almost as much as I do riding them. In fact I could say that I get the little tingle of excitement as a new build finishes, as much as I do when I'm heading for an amazing bit of trail.

I've thought about this a fair bit, and it seems to fit into four main areas for me:

1. independence from the bike shop and being a bit tight for cash
2. a creative outlet
3. developing a useful skillset while out and about.
4. stimulating problem solving

"This project came about due to my brave/foolish entry into the megavalanche"

INDEPENDENCE

I'll come clean; I do know my local mechanic by name, and I have been back to the dealer on a couple of occasions, but by and large I've been able to sort my own problems and upgrades out. It's very satisfying when you finish a job after an hour on the internet reading forums and watching 'how to' videos, to have put it all together, and sorted out your issue yourself. The biggest danger from this realisation that the bike doesn't have to go back to the 'shop' each time is that you can then turn into a bike fettler.

My name is Steve, and I'm a bike fettler. There, said it. This can start innocently with changing a cassette and chain, maybe purchasing a chain wear measure, but can slowly develop in the background over time.

In itself this is a good thing as we begin to be able to look after ourselves and our bikes, and to begin to bespoke our ride to make the bike

fit our exact and individual needs, but if you find yourself browsing the internet for wheel balancing jigs, you need to take yourself off for a quiet word in the corner; you may have gone a bit far. I did once have a Cannondale, whose bikes come with a little stars and stripes badge on the frame announcing "hand made in the USA", by the time I sold it there should have had a little saltire on it proudly announcing "hand fettled in Scotland", there were hardly any original parts on it.



Stands
really are
vital.

CREATIVITY

Once I'd virtually re-built a bike, it was only a short step to building one from scratch. A few months scanning e-bay and a steady trickle of parcels started to arrive in the post, to settle in the corner of the dining room. This project came about due to my brave/foolish entry into the [megavalanche](#).



The Beast

A few you-tube videos later and I was convinced that I was seriously under-biked, and didn't really want to put my pride and joy through that. In the end I created a bespoke freeride beast that was the most forgiving downhill oriented bike I've ever ridden. Sadly it was completely impractical so had to be sold on return home, but I had the best bike I could have had for that week of racing, and it was an important part of a fantastic experience. I really got a great deal out of the creativity of the project too, and what I discovered on that project strongly influenced my choice of next (and current) bike.

MORE INDEPENDENCE

Once the initial cost of the tools is overcome, then with a bit pf practice, you now have the ability to do the job again for much less cash, and at a time that suits you. Increasingly I also find that maintenance, like taking the cranks off

to have a good look at the bottom bracket, happens more often as I gain confidence in doing it. This also leads from what you might term 'must do' jobs to 'should do' jobs.

With a little bit of instruction from said mechanic I found that now I can bleed brakes, the door is open to change the hoses on my brakes; that now I know how to adjust spoke tension, not only do I have nice round wheels, but the one time I 'pretzelled' a wheel (30mph into a tree works every time) I was able to swap the rim for another by using the same techniques; that once I was over the nervousness of touching air cans, I was able to fit a volume adjusting kit to my rear shock, and stop wincing on drop offs.

In addition to being able to do some of my own work I have also been able to source my own parts. One impulse buy of an £12 set of calipers in Lidl, has now left me able to source my own bearings, and so my headsets have never been in such good condition, and my chain tensioner roller works a treat too.



Dead or just resting

USEFUL SKILLSET

The final advantage of starting to have a bit of a tinker, is out on the trail. Mechanicals that I have seen reduce people to tears, and leave them carrying their trusty steeds are now less likely to floor me, and I am certainly much more likely to try to bodge a fix from bits from my spares bag than I would have been before I got started in the garage. I've bodged a fair few derailleurs in my time now.

To put this in perspective; I was out on a ride last year when I came across two guys staring at an upturned bike scratching their heads. When we asked what was up they replied that their day was over before it had really got started. Being fairly sure they were referring to a bike problem I asked what was the issue and was promptly told that the chain had been totalled and they would now have to push back to the car. It took me no more than 5 minutes to tidy the chain up, fit a 'magic link' and reattach it; and the other riders were back on with their day. They were so amazed that one of them even rummaged in his pocket and handed me a fiver for saving the ride! I didn't want the fiver - to me it was a simple thing, but to these two guys it was a day ender.

For the adventurous rider, the above story should leave you with a wry smile on your face thinking about the two 'innocents' in the story. Why? - well there are plenty of big rides to be had, and a good example is the Glen Tilt round - a 50km epic day out. The point being that if you suffer a mechanical half way round, then 25km is an easy(ish) ride in an afternoon, but have you ever contemplated walking 25km pushing a bike in an afternoon? - better make sure you can fix your bike.



#MTBTALK

THE ORIGINAL TWITTER CHAT
FOR BIKERS, BY BIKERS.
EVERY SUNDAY

HOSTED BY **@PEDALSLIP**

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WE LOVE MOUNTAIN BIKING
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Just Like Buses

Denny Smith

Since the mid '90's the only time I've ridden a bike was to get to the shops, which was maybe once a year at best. During last summer the trusty Muddy Fox I had since my teens was stolen from the back of my house. It was my own thought, I just forgot about it whilst I was cleaning the garage. I had been toying with the idea of getting a slightly more up-to-date mountain bike so that I could join my friends who had started riding on a regular basis over at Swinley. At the end of last year I started in earnest to get things sorted and just like buses two came along at once. I managed to pick up a Cube Aim 2014 which had its forks upgraded and I was more than happy.

Whilst I was waiting to pick it up, a friend of



mine, who I had helped out quite a bit over the last few years offered to buy a brand spanking new bike for me - all I had to do was choose. Having no idea what half the stuff on a modern bike was I was clueless and totally bewildered; about all I could decide was to go full suspension. With my decision having that

sound foundation I jumped online and read all I could. It didn't really help, the plethora of options only served to confuse me even more; Down Hill, Enduro, Cross Country or XT; Hardtails, Full Sus; hydraulic disc breaks and



dropper posts! Luckily one of my group rode a 2014 Whyte T130 and knowing the level of research he puts in to everything along with his attention to detail I knew that would be a good place to start.

Swinley Bike Hub offered a test ride service, which allows a 3 hour session to ride the bike of your choice from their selection. Through what I had read I picked the Mondraker Dune and the Whyte T130 RS and headed off to the Green Trail for a warm up. I felt like Bambi taking his first steps weaving through the trees, but it felt great and I instantly felt a feeling of regret that I had taken so long to do this. From there we headed off to the Blue Trail with my buddy offering tonnes of advice

along the way.

Swinley is a purpose built set of trails on Crown Estate land and is very well

maintained, but that didn't really make it any easier on my unconditioned body. Before long I was puffing like a character from Thomas the Tank Engine and on the brink of being sick - I had only done the first climb. It was also at this point I was introduced to the need to take on the correct fluids and fuel your body, but such was the urge to spew I couldn't take in the amount I probably needed. I managed to make it half way around the Blue after shortcutting 'Stickler' and at a convenient point we headed back to the hub via the fire roads to pick up the T130 RS. After all, I wanted to try both the bikes before I was completely and utterly spent.

At the hub they talked through how I found the ride and offered a few more pointers and



Denny is a family man but still finds the time to get out on the steed for a good ride! You can follow him on twitter





Fatbike, the true all-terrain/all-season bike! Fatbikes are revolutionizing the mtb culture and industry, and many don't know what to do with it... of course, until they try one! As they say, "once you go fat, there is no way back" A Fatbike is simply a truly all-terrain mountain bike. Extremely capable and fun to ride, and totally forgiving; they can ride where a regular mountain bike may struggle or simply can't go on... I was hooked with bikes, since the very first moment I rode one. When I tried a fatbike for the first time, I felt the same novelty I had on my very first bike ride ever in 1970 at the age of 3, and then consecutively somehow again, in the year 1980 with my first bmx racing bike, and then in 1990 with my first mtb... and then,

came the fatbike!! And I just fell in love again. I am aware that like me, there must be millions of devoted bike lovers around the entire planet; and yet rarely, or mostly never, ever I see one single person as enchanted, mesmerized and so interested as myself in regards to bikes. I am sure that there gotta be many others somewhere around the world (or at least probability speaking). We are each different than the other, so whatever drives us is not the same for each individual, as we all now. Yet, in regards to bikes, for me it always has been about the joy, the freedom, the adventure, the adrenaline rush, the challenge, and so on. I had just learned to ride and instantaneously loved my first bike. The real fun was on the dirt, away from the roads. My dad had a Yamaha 275

hp motocross bike. So, I called my bike a bicicross; It was an object, and inanimate thing that had a charm and an aura around it, and an amazing extraordinary feeling when riding it. Life enhancer...That's a bike for me; my iron-horse, my ride to conquer and explore, to discover and get lost in nature while having a blast of adrenaline and pure raw fun! Maskinen Bikes represent that passion, love and that obsession for perfection and performance that I have suffered from since day one. Bikes have evolved tremendously, and yet for me the core remains the same, having fun while getting lost in nature, away from the madness of this world, and into wonderland. With Maskinen I have wanted to create a bike and a company that vibrates/resonates with this core.



Away from the nonsense, and the deceptive campaign of selling bikes under the pressure of the rat-race. I am not a number or simply a consumer; I am an individual, a biker, a rider. Building high-performance custom bikes is for me a reflection of this immense appreciation towards these magical inanimate objects we call bicycles and the indescribable pleasure that riding one can bring. Maskinen Bikes is a bicycle company with a different objective than most. We love biking, and we love what we do. We are riders, and we build superb extraordinary bikes for those who appreciate the ultimate level of performance and awesomeness. The bicycle industry has a different agenda, and the growing number of aficionados around the world can easily follow the crowd; but the true connoisseurs know better. For me it is all

about riding. I see the fatbikes as the pinnacle of that evolution that I have been experiencing since 1970, when I became a biker. My very first bike ever did the job well when dashing down the dirt and jumping small bumps and turning fairly fast, and so on. Then bmx came into my life in 1980, and besides the racing and competing, and jumping with a ramp over 7 neighbors children, it was still about been free on top of this awesome human powered 2 wheeled vehicle; and my bmx was then the ultimate all-terrain bike. Then, after looking at pictures in my -Bmx Action- magazine of the first official mountainbikes and saying, "never", I got into it, and bought my first mtb after trying one in 1990... and then they evolved and evolved, and we went from Cantilever Brakes to hydraulic disk brakes within a couple of decades,

and from Chromoly-4130 steel frames to high-modulus Carbon-fiber frames and full-suspension as well... etc, etc. Now, with the proven capabilities of these new versions of all-terrain bikes, the fatbike is the continuation of this evolution. In the early 90's, the performance of tires and wheels started to be aid by the development of suspension, while at the same time the industry began inviting professional road cyclist to join mountainbiking, and so lightness and slimier wheels and tires became some sort of obsession. We have come a long way. Fatbikes proved and reminded us that the big air chamber and wide rims create a shape of the tire where the side walls have less propensity to collapse or slide in the rim at lower pressure while riding. So, it is not just the huge footprint with it's mind blowing grip and traction, and float-

ability; but also, its capacity to act in a way as a suspension. These bikes can just roll over rocks and roots, and so on, while gliding smoothly somehow as if hovering over the ground that its been absorbed by the air in the tire's chamber. Who ever thinks that fatbikes are just a

three. No asphalt, but passionate about the dirt. Then came BMX racing in the 80's, and mtb since 1990. I love bicycles at a level that (only) a very few do... for some reason. Maskinen Bikes is located in the nordic country of Denmark, and with this in mind we chose the name.



passing metamorphosis of a mtb, does not truly understand what's going on. Fatbikes are revolutionizing the mtb industry, and are here to change the way we ride and the places we can ride at. Maskinen is committed to absolute excellence and obsessed with optimum performance. We have taken the middle man out of the equation, and instead we work with and sell directly to our customers, offering to the bike community a truly high-end high-performance custom-build fat-tire carbon bike; backed by a lifetime warranty and a crash-replacement-policy. Build and test ridden in Denmark by a knowledgeable technician and rider, and delivered to your doorstep at no extra cost.

"The Word Maskinen means 'The Machine'"

At Maskinen, we build The Ultimate Riding Machine. Build for riders, by riders!! Maskinen is a new brand, but I am an old bike freak... I've been hooked since my first bike in 1970, at the age of

The word Maskinen means "The Machine". We chose a Danish word that would sound the same in many different languages. The symbol "The three horns of Odin", a god of the Viking mythology, was chosen to go hand in hand with the Danish name, and to represent power and perfection above the mundane. Very much in line with the Maskinen philosophy. At Maskinen our motto is

"obsession with excellence and an uncompromised quest for optimum performance". We specialize in customized, hand built, top of the line high performance carbon fatbikes. We make no compromises with regard to technology and innovation. We are passionate, knowledgeable, trained and experienced bike riders and technicians. We know exactly what we want in order for our bikes to perform the way we need them. In short, we love bikes... and we love what we do! Riders create the culture and the culture is what shapes the industry. Industry is always slow to catch up, but in the end it always does. We at Maskinen are certain that fatbikes are here to not only to stay, but to actually revolutionize and redefine the bicycle industry. A fatbike is an all terrain mountain bike, extremely fun to ride and totally forgiving. It can ride easily where a regular mountain bike may struggle or simply may not be able. Maskinen Prodigy is the most versatile and capable over-all bike I have ever ridden in 44 years of passionately riding on dirt. The fatbike makes for a very smooth enjoyable ride in otherwise treacherous terrain such as snow, sleet, mud and sand... and everywhere else. It is actually an all season - all terrain bike, transformable into 26 x 85mm, 27.5+ and 29+ to better serve a person's riding style and the riding conditions. As a brand, Maskinen is all about



customization, and so should potential owners not want one of the six spec levels then this frame can be built from the ground up. Our Prodigy Racing-Series is a no holds barred, top shelf, premium specked fatbike that can be totally customized by the buyer. It uses the most effective technologies available in regards to endurance, strength, reliability, weight, and human power transfer. Quality control on our bikes is essential. By producing fully customized hand built bikes in Denmark we can ensure quality because we build our bikes our-

selves . . no mass production. Our bikes are built and customized specifically for each individual, test ridden by a qualified Maskinen technician, and ready to ride. Prodigy is in our opinion exceptional, a world apart from other fatbikes. We care about real life riding and racing performance. We are not aiming to build a fatbike for the masses nor to compete in a crowded industry. Our bike is a high end piece of machinery for the rider who puts quality and performance above all else.



Maskinen Fatbikes do really seem the business! And who knows maybe this is the way that MTB is going these days. I know for sure I want to have a bash on one! You can find your fatty at :

maskinenbikes.com/



Disclaimer: No consideration was received for this piece and is purely an article to discuss the topic of fatbikes and to look into the world of a small company of riders who build bikes!



They didn't have
selfie sticks in
those days...
Better times for
sure!



B I E E C Y C L E

Time for a history lesson. And not one that you would be skiving!

Si Edwards

I ride Mountain Bikes. And I'm guessing that as you are reading this then you do too. But where did it all begin, and who actually invented the sport that we all love?

The 1800's

Some say that mountain biking began with the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps who were formed in America in 1896. They customized bikes to carry gear over rough terrain, earning the nickname of the Buffalo Soldiers.

The 1940's

Maybe it was started in the 1940's by road racing cyclists

who rode their road bikes in the winter to keep fit. The bikes were fitted with chunkier tyres and the sport of Cyclo-Cross was born.

The 1950's

Others say it was the Velo Cross Club Parisien (VCCP) of France that started mountain biking. The club was comprised of 20 young bikers from Paris, who between 1951 and 1956 developed a sport

that resembles present day mountain biking.

It could have also been John Finley Scott, who was the first mountain biker in the United States. In 1953 he constructed what he called a 'Woodsie Bike', using a diamond frame, balloon tires, flat handle bars, and cantilever brakes. He was more than 20 years ahead of his time although there were many at that time who didn't share the same passion.

Any of these can lay claim to laying the foundations of the sport. If thought about it rationally, off road cycling has existed since the birth of the Bicycle as few roads in the 19th century were paved!



The VCCP on a regular meet

Despite all this, it is fair to say that the birth of the mountain bike as we know it started in 1970's California; Marin County to be exact.

Riders, including the familiar names of Gary Fisher, Tom Ritchey and Joe Breeze, would modify cruise bikes from the 30's and 40's, mainly the Schwinn Exelsior, with balloon tyres, gears and motocross style handlebars, creating the 'Klunker'.



They would race down mountain fire roads, causing the hub brake to burn the grease inside, requiring the riders to repack the bearings. These were called "Repack Races" and triggered the first innovations in mountain bike technology as well as the initial interest of the public.

The 70's and 80's

It was not until the late 1970s and early 1980s that road bicycle companies started to manufacture



**They clearly have
no care for the
26"/27.5"/29"
argument!**

mountain bicycles using high-tech lightweight materials. The first two mass produced mountain bikes were sold in 1982: the Specialized Stumpjumper and the Univega Alpina Pro.

Which brings us to the sport as we know it today. Mountain Biking has come a long way and the technology progresses almost on a daily basis.

Whether you ride Cross Country,

Downhill or any other discipline, one thing is for certain. The sport is growing and becoming increasingly popular. The bikes are better, the facilities are better, and the general attitude towards maniacs screaming down a big hill on a bike are better. And I for one am glad to be a part of it! - Si



Si Edwards is the genius behind Sacred Dirt and you can usually find him wittering about mountain biking on Twitter! (Maybe they should be called "Twitterings"... Get it?!) You can follow Si on @sacredDirt.

Have you got any interesting historical articles you are eager to share with the world? Maybe you have an ancient full susser from the 90's that you could review for us or compare to a modern steed! Get in touch with us at:

beaconmtb@gmail.com



FEATURE





*“It’s a truly beautiful
part of the world.”*

A possible trip for this summer!

SNOW_ DONE

Kevin Philips

Looking back on it now, it makes me wonder why I don’t do it more often. Just hop in the car with your mates and your bikes and head to somewhere truly epic. Well that’s what we did, a road trip to North Wales with the plans of riding

Snowdon, the tallest Mountain in Wales, measuring 1085m above sea level. I’m lucky enough to have done it before along with another one of our group (stubby), so 4 of the other guys were relying on us for our navigational skills...oh dear!

What a
beautiful
summer's day
at the halfway
hut!



We set off from Pontypool in South Wales around 8am. Our plan was to cruise on up, get some lunch, check in to our bunk house and then head to Llanberis for a 5pm start on the ascent. As this was June and we knew it wouldn't get dark to approximately 10pm we had a good idea that we'd get up and back before nightfall. Also, this avoids the voluntary bike ban during the busier summer months. http://www.cyclingnorthwales.co.uk/pages/snowdn_volunt.htm

We start the climb up the road and it's all laughs, jokes and wheelies. Myself and Stubbs know what's ahead so try and conserve some energy as the others plough on ahead up the steep tarmac. As we get to the stile where the off road climb starts proper we see a guy with a radio who looks like he's laying out some kind of route and he informs us that there's a running race up Snowdon that

evening – we really should have checked things like this in advance! So that's our planned route out the window. I wanted to do Llanberis path both up and down, but with hundreds of runners coming up that's just not going to be possible. Luckily as I mentioned before, we've been here before and know a different descent down. So now it's Llanberis path up and Rangers path/Telegraph Valley down.

“When I say easy, I mean in comparison of what's to come.”

The first section of the climb to the “halfway” hut is relatively easy, it's all rideable with smooth paths dotted with rocky sections to navigate – when I say easy, I mean in comparison of what's to come, a good level of fitness is still re-

quired. It takes us approximately 40 minutes to reach this point and we're all feeling good. We stop here for a few photos and to fuel up on gels. The weather is starting to close in around us now but luckily we'd come prepared and on goes an extra layer of clothing. It's not quite raining but the mist is coming down and visibility is reducing. Luckily the Llanberis path (arguably the most popular route up Snowdon) is very easy to follow so this doesn't affect us too much.

On we go and I remember from last time that not that far ahead the trail jacks right up and it's impossible to ride. We keep going and at this point we start to spread out; Joe and Wearn in front, Neil and myself somewhere in the middle and Stubbs and Ben just behind us. It's 'hike-a-bike' time, some of the guys opt to carry the bike for approximately 800m of very steep trail, my legs just won't have

push, lift and carry my bike up there until we reach the little tunnel where the railway goes overhead. We again stop here to regroup and take a few more pics; for some reason Joe is only wearing bib shorts when I turn around from taking a few obligatory shots of my bike! This never gets quite explained! Here we bump into a guy riding his bike who's decided to stop there and blast back down the Llanberis path before the runners start. We have a brief chat and wish him well as we watch him disappear into the mist.

It's 'hike-a-bike' time again and we set off up the steep, loose trail. It only takes about 10 minutes to pass this section but

it seems much longer!! As it levels out and we can ride again we pass the guy we saw at the bottom laying out the route for the runners, he wishes us well and he jokingly asks what took us so long



The steeds at the summit

to get up there! It's so misty up here now that I can't see further than about 20m in any direction, I have no idea how far from the top I am but have a feeling I'm nearly there. Then out of the gloom I start to pick out shapes up ahead that I remember from the last time I was here; I've nearly made it! I reach the steps up to the base of the trig point tired but exhilarated! Within about 10 minutes we're all stood at the trig point all smiling from ear to ear, we made it! It took us just under 2 hours to get to the summit. We're the only ones here, that's an epic feeling. We snap off a few pics and head to the visitors centre, unfortunately it's shut, but that's OK, it means we get to do the descent sooner.



The gang all made it up!
Now What about down?!

We ride down the loose stones at the side of the railway track checking to see if there's anything we recognise as we have to go slightly off piste for the first section. Stubbs suddenly says, "there it is", there's some sort of marking he recognises – I think it was a pillar of some sort – we cross the railway track and head off out across the rock strewn open moor land, popping off little rock drops and sloped rocks making awesome natural jumps. There's so many lines through here that you just make your own way until eventually the trail narrows to a natural, obvious path.

It's hard to explain the Ranger path as a

descent as it's pretty full on, you're concentrating so much on what you're doing, you don't really remember the route you've taken. I remember there's rocks, lots of rocks! There's some great flowing sections, some big rocky berms, some drops, some "oh s**t" moments where I was hanging on and hoping and there was also some "f**k that" moments where I did get off and walk over it. If you've ever watched the Gee Atherton video of him riding it, it really doesn't convey how steep it really is.

We stop on one of the easier parts to all

get together and have a group photo, at which point the mist lifts for the first time and we get to see a bit of scenery. It's a truly beautiful part of the world. We set off again into more rocks, Joe is setting the pace as him and Neil disappear into the distance. We pick our way down and emerge onto a compact path and stop to look back at what we've just ridden down. It looks like the side of a cliff and somewhere in there is a trail. We check our watches and approximately 20 minutes after leaving the top, we've descended 500m on some of the toughest, most amazing trail I've ever ridden.



We carry on down this nice flowy bit of trail until we come to a gate and there I remember we need to turn right up a grassy bank to enable us to head down Telegraph valley back into Llanberis. It's at this point that the curse of the punctures starts. Tube changed we head up the climb as Niel regales us with stories of how awesome tubeless tyres are and that he hasn't had a puncture in 2 years. As we get to the top I start to explain to the guys who haven't ridden telegraph valley before what it's like. It's a fast, flat out trail with drainage ditches crossing the trail approximately 2-3 feet wide which you

have to hop over. We sort ourselves out into who we think will be fastest and off we go. I'm in about 4th position travelling at around 40kph when I come around a corner and see Niel stopped on the side. "puncture" he yells. I knew he'd regret upsetting the mountain gods by saying he hadn't had a puncture for 2 years haha. We're all together except Stubbsy and we get Niel's puncture fixed and head off again, just around the corner is Stubbsy changing a puncture in his wheel! We get that repaired and off we go again for about 200m, Niel has only gone and punctured the tube he's just put in!!

By this point it's about 8pm, it's getting cold and we're still not off the mountain yet. I think that this is a great indication of how being prepared saved us a lot of bother. We all had enough spares for ourselves and a few extras just in case. We also had lights, emergency blankets, first aid kit, extra layers of clothing and some energy bars etc in our packs should worse come to the worse. Puncture changed we finally head off, first person to a gate stops to open it for everyone else to go through, shuts it behind us and then vice versa all the way down. The trail is much faster than I remember, it's so much fun and hopping the drainage ditches takes some commitment to clear them. The trail comes to an end and we swing a right onto a road that will lead us back into Llanberis town. This section is called Cresta Run on Strava as it curves it's way smoothly between the fields like a ski slope. Talking of Strava, I checked my previous time for Telegraph valley – 5 minutes 37 seconds. The puncture curse descent this time took 39 minutes!

We get back to the cars just before 9pm. We did it! Up and down even after all those punctures and bad visibility in less than 4 hours, not bad going for a bunch of average riders. We load everything into the cars and head back to Betws-y Coed which we're using as a base. We make it back there just before Stables Bar stop serving food . <http://stables-bistro.co.uk/>. Luckily it's quite a warm evening and they have patio heaters, so still in our bike gear we grab a table and order in some well deserved food and beers.

How much bad luck?!



Mixed grills, burgers, steaks and pizzas were eaten along with some ciders and real ales. Well deserved after a long day.

Our bunk house is just down the road so we head off there to get showered and have another beer in their bar before calling it a night. We stayed at Glan Aber Bunkhouse. <http://www.bunkhouseinsnowdonia.co.uk/>.

The rooms consist of bunkbeds in each room. They're quite small, but were kept

clean and tidy. There's a shower room and toilets along with a drying room for any kit that got wet during the day. They also have secure bike storage in their cellar. It was £24.50 per person including a full breakfast the following morning, which was superb.

So that was it... Six lads from South Wales who are all of average fitness and bike handling ability conquered Snowdon

Kev Philips is a all in all tough nut to crack. The welsh in him can clearly be seen on this trip! You can follow Kev on twitter on @182target



one evening in June. If we can do it, you can too.



Review



Bell Stoker MTB Helmet - Review

Best Price: £34.99—tweekscycles.com (at point of review).

If you are a fan of Bell helmets but are put off by price then Bell have produced the Stoker which looks great and has all the features you need in a trail helmet. The helmet strikes a great balance between comfort and style and comes in six awesome colours. I have this Matt Retina Sear (Yellow) The helmet has

extended rear coverage for the back of the head and has an adjustable strap at the back so should fit most heads. It produces great cooling for the noggin when you are shredding the trails and an a visor offers protection from both the sun and the rain just adding to the practicality of this fantastic helmet. Sometimes the visor does occasionally slip and cannot be tightened meaning it can get in the way.

Pros

- ⇒ Light, comfortable and stylish
- ⇒ Good back of the head protection
- ⇒ Good adjustability
- ⇒ Great cooling vents
- ⇒ Brilliant value for money

Cons

- ⇒ Visor slips and cannot be tightened.





RIDING GUIDE SWINLEY FOREST

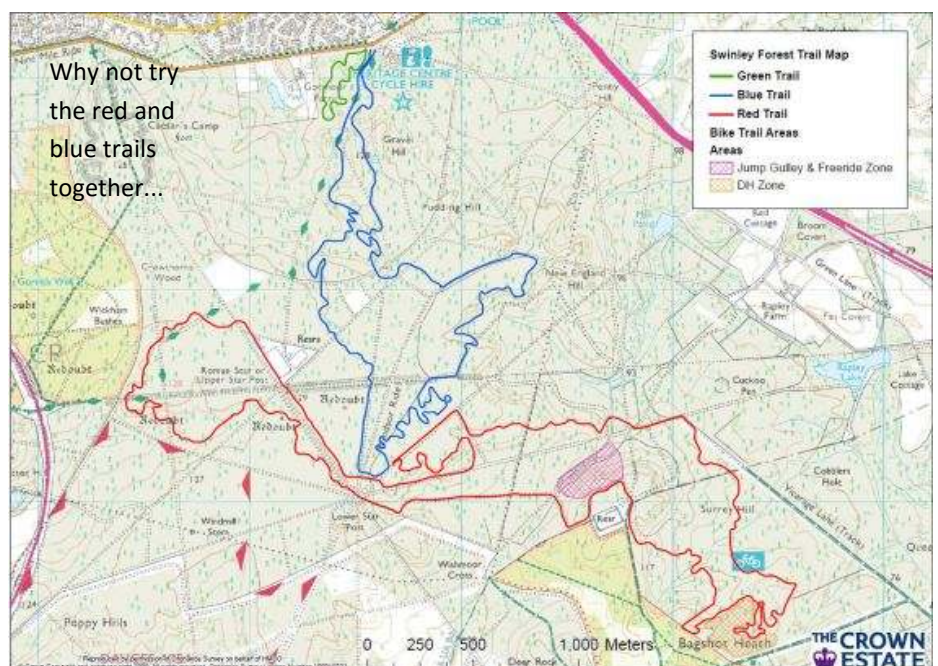
It's not often that Cranky Betty and I get out of Northern England, so when we realised that we were going to be spending a weekend with friends in West London we decided it would be best to punctuate an otherwise relaxing weekend with a trip to the 'world renowned' Swinley Forest in Berkshire. We had both heard about the quality of the trails there and to be honest we were just tired of riding in the still partially flooded northern provinces ('beyond the wall' if you're from the South).

Despite being somewhat hungover on a Sunday morning, thanks to a generous supply of Rum-filled pineapples the night before, we found it easy to navigate the M3 motorway and 'The Lookout' at Swinley Forest was relatively easy to find. It might be useful to note that there is a Sainsbury's round the corner, so if like us you need to stock up several litres of Lucozade and mountains of flapjacks

then you won't be disappointed. Whilst £4 for more than 4 hours of car parking seems like daylight robbery to me, I am informed that this is in fact competitively priced for the area, so it probably isn't so bad, plus there are lots of spaces. The café facilities seem pretty decent and the abundance of a type of outdoor furniture known as 'benches' suggests that the

weather in the south is far better than it is up north (this was later confirmed by the arid state of the trails).

Cranky Betty and I were feeling pretty rough (I don't think I can overemphasise this) so we thought about just riding the 6.25 mile blue route, though in reality we were never going to settle for not giving the 8 mile red route a blast as well. The



If you are a fan of rough technical terrain then Swinley probably won't do it for you, to their credit the trails at Swinley Forest are very well groomed. The building crew behind the Blue and Red trails definitely deserve credit for squeezing the

hitting another interesting descent or feature.

We noticed that from a technical perspective there didn't seem to be much difference between the blue and red trails. There are some more aggressive descents on the red trail but, as long as you're happy railing

sporting the standard 160mm enduro bikes or 120/130mm trail bikes. In an ideal world a light short travel trail bike would probably be best suited to Swinley, as far as we saw all of the features were rollable and the terrain never really gets that rough (though as Stainburn Forest locals everything seems smooth compared to that rock garden!).

Overall I would certainly recommend Swinley Forest, it is clear that the building crew have put a lot of time and effort into ensuring they get the most out of the landscape. It won't be to everyone's tastes, particularly if you're looking for World Cup standard downhill runs or purely natural trails, but there are far worse ways to spend a few hours at weekend, and with its close proximity to London it will undoubtedly remain a popular trail destination for weekend warriors for years to come.



Those well groomed berms...

most out of the limited changes in elevation that the landscape allows. There are some ingenious uses of switchbacks to ensure that you can enjoy the descents for as long as possible, and some well-built and high-banked berms ensure you carry as much speed as possible. Don't misunderstand me, you will definitely spend most of your time putting in pedal strokes at Swinley, but it never really feels like you're having too pedal too long before

berms, climbing through root laden forest sections and sucking up the table tops you will get a lot of enjoyment out of completing both trails together. A particular enjoyable section for us was 'Red 25' which rewards riders who climb to the top with a fast flowing jump line (pump jumps and table tops are the order of the day) that leaves you wanting to come back and session it over and over again until you're clearing everything at speed.

The majority of the riders we saw (read: cycled past us) were either

If you're looking for first hand reports from regular rider's than Cranky Betty are the people to listen to. You can find them at:

Crankybetty.co.uk







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