



**PEDALSLIP
AND BEACON
DIG DAY**

**FEATURE
COAST TO COAST**

**GET STARTED
IN MTB**



ISSUE #TWO



A Real Mountain

Biking Magazine



Real World Riding



WELCOME TO



"Welcome to our second thrilling instalment of Beacon MTB Magazine. In this issue we have brought to you, not one, but two UK ride guides! We also look at how to get started in MTB riding and our feature piece is a fantastic article surround a Coast to Coast ride! We hope you enjoy!- Editor

The cover picture this week was taken by yours truly. It was only possible for me to get any ounce of photography knowledge by attending a workshop at the recent #MTBMeetup. The workshop was run by Chris Davies; a professional photographer who has worked with the likes of Polaris Bike wear. You can find Chris at: www.chrisdaviesphotography.com/





AVERAGE JOE

David Bates

My name is Dave and for all tense and purposes i am your average Joe. Im nearing 40yrs of age and I have a little extra comfort around the midriff - well I do enjoy a good real ale and a piece of pie, sweet or savoury i'm not fussed. But i am like the majority, if not all of the readers of this magazine when it comes to the love of the MTB. I started riding around 6yrs ago with my 1st ride being the awesome Llandegla. Sadly my bike didn't appreciate it and the smashed up suspension and burnt out brakes led me to believe that my £100 Halfords special would not cut the mustard. It was time for a new bike... Along came my Cannondale Rush Carbon - and there started my love for the bike and the wilderness. My passion has taken me to most parts of

the UK with the decent of Snowdon and the unassisted trip from C2C being right up there, but i found that every where i went i wanted to catch the person in front. my riding buddy Sam states that id race a 5yr old girl if it meant winning! I have my limits - they'd have to be at least 10 ha ha.

With this in mind i decided to enter my first XC race in March this year. It was at Sherwood Pines and part of the Midlands XC series. As myself and my team mates rocked up, the adrenaline was flowing - another toilet stop was required - but it was time to go to the starting grid. We had done a quick reccie of the course and it looked to flow pretty well. 7km laps of mud, grit and speed. The gun went and we were off. The pace in which the riders went off was staggering! My old skool 26" full sus was about to get a different kind of ride. As the ride settled into a rhythm, the technical switching through the narrow trees was sweet, i loved it. Myself and a couple of others were passing each other back and forth, this was a proper race. As it was my first time i wasn't overly concerned about my final position, but this was fun, maybe i could get another place up the leaderboard?!? The atmosphere was awesome, the crowds were buzzing and being able to follow some of the 'elites' shredding some tight lines along the single track was a pure

buzz. That said my lungs were now bleeding and with one last push towards the finish line, I gained another place on the last corner. Was i glad to see the chequered flag? Hell yes! I was tired, but i was on cloud 9. I managed a respectable 14th so pretty happy with that. But realised, as i had having completed Llandegla for the first time 6yrs earlier, that i needed a new bike... bring on the Haibike Greed carbon as ridden by the German XC team in the olympics - well we can all have dreams ;-) next stop Can-nock.



So, i may be an average Joe... but i'm Joe with a passion, a passion for all things MTB. #lovetheride

David Bates (or Joe... I forget) is another one of those riders who clearly rides for the love of it. You can find David on Twitter: @Davidbts







GETTING STARTED

In this article we'll look at getting ready to select your first appropriate bike. The second part will help you both select your bike, and also understand some of the jargon and 'stuff' that will surround bike choice for you up to getting your leg over a bike for the first time. Part three, we'll look at what to do once you are ready to go and making a start on riding.

So: a few things about mountainbiking to get you started:

1. It doesn't have to cost a fortune, but it can do if you want it to
2. Beware bike shop sales people, and especially those in retailers that don't specialise in bikes
3. Seek advice – well done, good start, you're already looking about by finding this article
4. Be curious, investigative, resourceful, and above all, question.

In this article we'll deal with whether you need a bike and advice on buying if you decide to.

FIRST STEPS

Don't rush out and buy a bike straight away. You need to decide why you want to ride, where you want to ride and how often, alongside what your budget is too.

WHY DO YOU WANT TO RIDE?

This will influence many of your decisions right from the start.

If it's **social**, then you don't necessarily need a fancy bike, more a bike that will enable you to join in with other people, perhaps in a club. Talk to your local club, and get their advice on a first bike, or they may have bikes to borrow.

Have you been reading magazines and watching films and decided that you want some of the **adventure** to be had from this amazing and varied activity? Then do some more research (reading parts 2 and 3?) to help you match your enthusiasm, pocket and to find yourself the perfect bike for what you want

to ride.

Are you **joining your mates** in biking? Then tap into both their knowledge of bikes and you, and work with them to help find the perfect match.

Do you see biking as an **opportunity to get fitter**? Then you have come to the right sport, and you just need to try it.

AN HONEST APPRAISAL

So with some thought about why you want to ride, be honest with yourself about what you want to ride and if possible, how realistic that might be. You may aspire to ride the world cup downhill route at Fort William, but *really*? After a month's riding? If you're determined to develop your riding, and aspire to big stuff, then by all means invest in a new fancy bike that will initially be more capable than you, but I would suggest a little caution to anyone about to invest in a new bike.

ROUTES TO GETTING SAT ON A BIKE ON A



TRAIL SOMEWHERE

There are numerous, and many are obviously related to the answers to the questions above. Going with your mates? – borrow a bike, setting out to become a trail god as fast as possible? – employ a coach and use one of their bikes etc. but here are a few things to consider:

Do you need a new bike? – if your budget is reasonable, and you'd like to get out a couple of times a month if possible (or more) and you aspire to ride something rougher than canal towpaths, then you could do a lot worse than a second hand ex-hire bike from a trail centre. This will have been used, and so will be reduced in cost, but it should have been well maintained. Often there is also the advantage of being able to hire the bike beforehand to try it out to see if it suits you, and you can also try to get the hire price taken off the sale price if you decide you do like it.

Go on a quiet day and you should be able to expect a little time with the mechanic choos-



ing the best size and design appropriate to your aspirations. My first proper mountain-bike was an ex-hire from Glen Tress and it was awesome; it's still going; I saw it for sale

again a few months back. Another advantage of the trail centre hire shop is also the availability of group rides organised by local coaches, who can help you make an informed decision on your purchase too.

Buying second hand elsewhere comes with the same opportunities and pitfalls as it does with any other mechanical purchase. Person to person is definitely the way forward. E-bay for instance, buying without seeing has too many pitfalls to be recommended for the first bike.

So finally, if you're flush with cash and want the best bike you can get and aren't afraid to splash a wad on a new steed, then you should still be aware of a couple of things:

1. Your own enthusiasm
2. Fashion

YOUR OWN ENTHUSIASM

You've done your research and you have a positive picture of yourself at the end of a trail having ridden something amazing, and you pick your steed from the pages of a magazine to suit your image. If it's based on a magazine article then it's likely you're looking at a purchase from a large dealer.

The advantage of buying from a dealer is that many of them will have the same bike for hire as for sale, and so you can try it out, and get the hire cost taken from the cost of the purchase if you decide to buy – a good move if you have the option.

Other good options for a bargain new bike (but without some of the advantages of the shop) are the on-line only sales companies such as Vitus, Canyon, and Rose all of whom produce amazing bikes at incredible prices.

There are also demo days, where suppliers and manufacturers will bring their latest bikes to a trail centre for anyone to try. A manufacturer will often give very good advice on which level of bike you should try, and what size.

FASHION

To your advantage is the fact that you can buy a brand new bike from a dealer at sometimes up to 2/3 the price of the latest version just by purchasing last year's model. It can sometimes be as simple as accepting a red bike over a blue bike and saving £hundreds. Take a look at the specifications and although there may be differences, unless the design changes significantly from one year to the next, then you rarely lose out buying last year's model.

ASPIRATION AND REALITY

Let's face it; a bike that has wheels and can be both powered up and along as well as stopped appropriately can be ridden on most



trails. The skill is in selecting one that will last a reasonable period of time, will consistently stop and go at your will, and one that will be comfortable and controllable in the environment you wish to go, and maybe fairly efficient.

A final word about practicality. The best bike for a type of terrain isn't necessarily the only one that can be ridden on it. Simpler, heavier, less 'flash' and cheaper bikes will get you out and about in the hills, so don't get trapped into buying a super-steed unnecessarily.

This is the beginning of a 3 part guide to getting started in the world of mountainbiking. You can find this article and much more at realworldriding.com





#MTBTALK

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RUBBER ON TRAIL

Alan Storer

It was one of those conversations that started in a pub (like all the best conversations), and went something like this:

My mate (let's call him Bob): So, what sort of mountain biker are you?

Me: Eh?

Bob: What sort of mountain biker are you?

Me: Um, a bit of everything, I guess. Why?

Bob: Well, I picked up one of your mags (not *those* mags) while I was waiting for you to get your backside ready. They were going on about Downhillers, Trail Riders, XCers (whatever *they* are). So, what are you?

I paused, taking a long pull of my pint. It was a good question. I thought a bit more, and realised there wasn't an answer. Not for me, anyway. The thing is, I don't actually know what I am. I ride DH. I ride slalom. I even ride XC. I don't dirt jump though, I look terrible in skinny jeans...

Truth is, I'm not really sure there is that much of a difference anymore, not if you discount the extremes that inevitably occur in any hobby (think train spotters, you'll see what I mean). Let's face it, it's not really like we need separate bikes for each discipline any more – sure, you're not likely to win a World Cup DH on a 140mm trail bike, but it'll do for most of us average Joes (and Joannes) out there.

Sure, it's nice to have more than one bike (I have two – a freeride/DH-lite rig and a hardtail), but gone are the days when you could spot a type of rider by what they ride (I'm not counting the whip-thin lycra-clad XC whippets on skinny-tubed hardtail race weapons). Other than DH race pyjamas, most ride kit looks pretty much the same in terms of style and cut (from a distance, anyway), with even trail riders embracing retina-searing neon and bagginess.



The divisions between the disciplines have closed to the extent that we're a pretty homogenous group these days. We all like riding bikes off road. I've yet to meet a rider that doesn't crave the feeling of tyres biting into a sinuous ribbon of singletrack. We spend most of our time either on bikes, thinking about bikes, or looking at bikes.

Mountain biking has gone pretty mainstream, for better or worse – bikes from retail giants like GoOutdoors are winning magazine group tests, Danny MacAskill is becoming a household name (something unheard of a few years ago), and I've

even seen a local kid doing his paper round on a fatbike (in the Fens, I kid you not). There are more people on mountain bikes than ever before – trail centres are booming, with more Forestry Commission woodlands becoming alive with the sound of rubber on trail. Ask most of the riders on these trails, or out on the moors, up in the hills, wherever you find them, and they'll give you the same answer.

Let's not define ourselves. Let's just be mountain bikers. Yes, even you, the whip-thin lycra-clad XC whippets, you're invited too...

I recently met Alan at the MTBMeetup. He was camped two tents down, and I managed to bump into him at the pub. Great chap.





DIG DAYS: WHAT'S THE FUN

Lewis Bell

When we were into bikes, as kids, we'd build all sorts of things. George used to head out to the local woods and build jumps with his mates. Lew used to take his BMX with him wherever he went, and drop off anything he could. Skateparks were fun, wheelies off walls were great, popping off curbs was sick... but building your own jump... phwoar, that was the best. Plywood sheets propped up on bricks or pallets pushed into dirt banks. Flying was awesome.

Then, when we got our bikes as adults, and re-found our love of all things two wheeled, we'd head out to pre-built parks and trail centres and ride whatever was there. Dalby Forest is our most local trail centre and, despite some of the flack it gets, we like it. The red route there is a fair distance of 21 miles (or slightly more if you take on some of the extra black, or add in some extra loops of features here or there) and has enough to offer for interest. But, eventually even we got a little bored.

That's when we started picking out the off-piste sections. For some reason, exploring something that wasn't marked was exciting. Maybe it's because we

weren't even sure where it went, or maybe it's that dream of finding something secret. Who knows. But we enjoyed it.

That's when we made the decision that it was time to build something of our own. Something that others might get the

same feeling from. Something new, or something hidden. Needless to say, we didn't want to do this at an actual trail centre – not without permission anyway. So, we headed down to a local, disused quarry and decided to take the spades.

We found an existing line in the wooded





area to the side of the actual quarry, with some potential for alternate options to spice things up. Rather than a straight to the bottom, 20 second run we wanted to add some twists and turns in there. After all, we know we're not invincible now, and flying off jumps scares us a little bit, especially on low-travel bikes.

After a little while realising we need to invest in new tools if we're going to be doing this regularly, we managed to dig out a couple of new berms, as well as a little drop. Shovels and a rake would've been very helpful, but in the end our spades managed to help us make something we were relatively happy with. Without the plywood kickers, this certainly felt like a grown-up addition to the trail.

What made this digging especially fun, was the challenge of actually managing to fit in what we had imagined. The wooded area is narrow and, has existing features, and isn't very steep. Creating something in this sort of space is a challenge, and that's enjoyable. Managing to cram it all in without destroying anyone else's features was an added difficulty that made it all the more interesting.

Getting together with mates and digging out ideas, testing them, changing them, adding to them, and ultimately having

fun is great. Managing to make something at the end of it that works, and is fun, is all the more rewarding. Honestly, after dipping our toes in some small digging like this, we're going to be tackling a much larger project in another wood we've already scouted.

Digging is definitely fun.

Lewis is the brains behind Pedalslip where they're very keen on connecting UK riders with wonderful UK things, all to do with Mountainbiking. I am very lucky to be one of Pedalslip's Team riders.





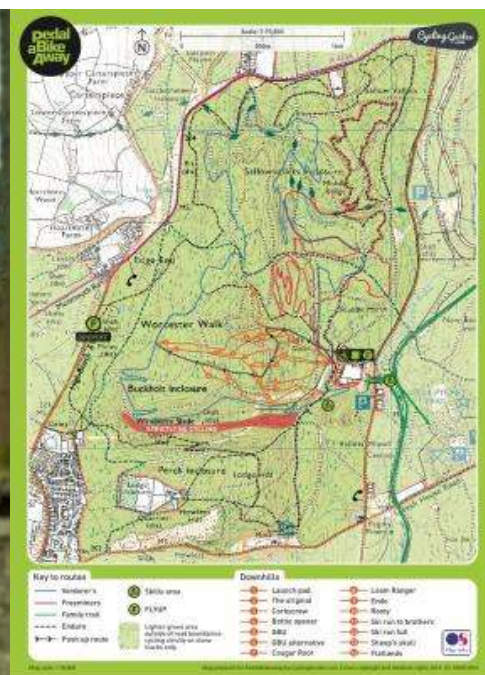
Well. I'm just going to come out and say it. I'd never ridden either mountain bike trails in the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire before yesterday. There, that wasn't so hard. Despite living in Bristol for over 20 years, I'd managed to studiously avoid the place. Not intentionally, of course.

give me for shunning their seemingly flat, turgid cousin? Thankfully, it took just one trip to the Forest of Dean for me to change my mind.

Its true that the forest is relatively flat, but the trails certainly make the most of every ounce of gradient they are given. We started off on the blue graded Verderers' Trail – a 11km loop with two brief, optional red sections- perfect for blasting round on an afternoon. I reckon it would make for a fun night ride set up too!

I loved the smooth, speedy surface (a welcome respite from a recent rocky weekend at Cwmcarn) that made you feel like you were flying at times, the snaking sinuous climbs that rose through beautiful woodland and the heavily bermed corners that just begged you to lean into them. Just. A. Bit. More. The lack of many technical trail features meant that you could focus on speed and precision, and feel REALLY good about yourself at the same time.

We did two laps before lunch as we were



having so much fun... After a bite to eat we headed back out to tackle the red graded Freeminers' Trail (also 11km). Despite enjoying the blue LOTS, I hadn't got my hopes up about the red. Friends who had ridden here last year had mentioned that large sections were unrideable due to thick, gloopy mud. As the trail was designed, built and is, for the most part, maintained by volunteers (unlike the blue), perhaps this is unsurprising. The official website even warns that sections of the Freeminers' have deliberately been left as close to natural trail as possible.

“they cram so much in”

Another surprise. We rode the red in March, after a wet winter, and the trail was in immaculate shape. There were the killer lung-busting climbs, the tight convoluted twists through improba-

ble gaps in the trees, the series of table top jumps that came out of nowhere, the natural roots and rock gardens that made you stay focused until you were literally spat out at the car park. I'm still not sure how they managed to cram so much in!

Two words. Simply awesome. And the cherry on the top: we got to see a family of wild boar as we were just leaving the forest! I'm definitely planning to come back this year and explore some of the unmarked trails which utilise the bridleways that zig-zag through the forest. Who knows? I may even brave the drops and jumps on the freeride and downhill tracks too.

Good to Know

- Use of all trails is **FREE**.
- Facilities include: **toilets, showers, bike wash**, large muddy-biker friendly **cafe**, range of **hire-bikes, bike shop** (with an impressive range of products and brands), and fully equipped **workshop**.

- **There is a large pay-and-display car park at the trail centre** (They have recently finished a huge expansion of the car park, which is just as well evidently. It was pretty full even on a chilly, overcast Saturday in early March.)

- To extend the day, you can **park for free** a couple km south of the trail centre on the west bank of Cannop Ponds. It is a lovely, flat 15 minute ride on a forestry track straight to the car park (if you decide to start here, remember to support the trail centre in some other way).

Emma is another keen rider. One of her brilliant traits is her keenness to get other people into riding MTB (particularly women). We agree with you Emma, the more riders the better!





DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

Declan Matthews

The day started like every tuesday ride i am used to. Got up to One Planet adventure (LLandegla), got all my gear out of the car, set the bike up and started my 3 mile slogger to the top of the climb.

As i got to the bottom of the first proper decent, just before snowdon view, i met two mtbr on the corner; they asked nicely if i had a spare pump to borrow. He had a snake bite puncture due to the rim pinching the tube. He started trying to pump his tire up but it wasn't inflating. These guys came all the way

from Liverpool and were proper nice lads. They were stranded for 45 minutes.

We got talking and he asked how far he had to push to get back to the visitor centre which was about 3 miles roughly. As my inner kindness shone through, I was unsure if i should give up my spare tube to get the poor lad back just incase i happened to get a blow out myself. I decided to go ahead and give him mine as i couldn't leave them on the mountain. As he put my inner-tube into his 27.5 rim he was continually thanking me. We decided to ride to snowdon view together and along the way we chatted about past problems and exchanged facebook profiles and instagram accounts.

Off we rode to the black and red trails. It was nice to actually ride with people and not on my own for once which was

a wonderful experience. As we got back to the cafe he offered to give me my innertube back. I told him to keep it in his bike as it only cost £2.50 and would rather him return safe back to where they were staying. He now knows to always bring a spare tube in the future. We are keeping in touch and planning our next meetup in May, maybe the blowout was a sign.

The moral of this story is to simply always ride with spares, because you might not be as lucky and have a Handsome Prince turn up to save you.

I met Declan at the recent MTBMeetup. He was rocking his Bell helmet that he reviewed recently and also his new bike which he is besotted with. Another sound guy. Follow him



*The enchanting wilderness can
take you back to any of the
fantasy lands of your favourite
childhood author. For me... It's
Tolkien.*





FEATURE





*A daunting challenge
for any rider!*

COAST TO COAST

Chris Colabella

No sooner had we finished our last challenge (ride to Dalby from Guisborough, do the red route, and ride home, covering 100 miles) than that evening one of us had a great idea: ride across England from West to East coast, on our mountain bikes, following a predominantly off road 200 mile route, and taking in

some of the best trails (and worst climbs) of the Lakes, Dales and North York Moors national parks along the way... In two days. What had started off as a half-jest at the pub between three friends last summer somehow ended up as a fully formed plan.

This is how Chris, Alan and me found ourselves in a hired van full of mountain bikes, kit, and lots of carbohydrates heading over to Whitehaven from our home in

nately, it was mainly on-road and the gradients never got too silly. We were duly rewarded with a quick blast on a few of the red and blue trails at Whinlatter For-

pick up our planned route again. It was during this detour we suffered the first of our four punctures for the day. This despite all of us running tubeless tyres.



Guisborough near the East coast. We were making our crossing unsupported, meaning that if there were a mishap our only recourse would be a grovelling phone call and a long car journey for an unimpressed spouse. To be honest, the idea of not completing the challenge never crossed any of our minds; we had an abundance of food and plenty of tools and tubes to nurse the bikes through any problems. The only thing we thought we might run out of was daylight and we'd brought lights against this eventuality. Good job we did as it turned out.

We started Day One with a quick road blast down the hill from the hotel to the harbour in Whitehaven where we made the obligatory wheel dip in the water. We then picked up the first part of our route which was an old railway line to Cleator Moor: a good warm up before the climbing to come! We were soon enjoying the scenery as we passed our first Lake: Loweswater. It was then the first of the day's many big climbs up the Whinlatter Pass. Fortu-

est, followed by an exhilarating descent through the trees along Comb Beck in order to pick up the road to Keswick. We toyed with stopping for a coffee and cake but were aware that many miles lay ahead so temptation was resisted and a quick pedal round the town got us to the old railway line towards Threlkeld.

It was a good job we resisted a leisurely lunch break as we suffered a few setbacks here. A few miles down the railway line we found a bridge had been washed away in the flooding earlier this year. A well intentioned



walker made a determined attempt to send us in entirely the wrong direction. In the end we simply thanked him then ignored his advice entirely and followed our map eastward until we could

One of the best bits of the route followed: the Old Coach Road across the moor from Threlkeld. This started with a very steep, loose, long, leg-burning, heart-pounding climb. It then rewarded with a lovely fast flowy descent. We were all grinning at the end despite halting to repair another puncture. We then picked up the road around Ullswater to Patterdale, this would have been very pretty if the weather had not descended and given us a brief downpour. We certainly couldn't complain though as it only lasted twenty minutes and was the only rain we rode in during either day.

As we sat munching our burgers and enjoying our hot coffee in Patterdale we looked at the mountain opposite trying to see a path. The map was telling us that we needed to go due East from this point. It was then that Alan said: "Are those people up there?" 30 minutes later and we had all made a spirited attempt to pedal up the incredibly steep, rocky and badly eroded bridle-

way, but it became necessary to shoulder the steeds and hike a bike to the top. We'd hoped to be rewarded with a brilliant descent but due to the bad weather earlier in the year some of the path back down the other side was

would receive covered in mud, stinking and starving as we were, but I needn't have worried. The good folks at Tan Hill could not have been more welcoming. We were told that they were used to 'the smell of fermenting cyclists',

joyed a second breakfast of Paninis and of course more coffee.

A mix of road and relatively easy trails (compared to The Lakes) took us through the market towns of Richmond and then



washed away and un-ridable. The bottom section was brilliant until we suffered puncture number three!

Once we reached Kirkby Stephen (via a seemingly endless series of gates, sheep and cow dung) I had to weigh the fact that we were only a few miles from our overnight stay at Tan Hill Inn against the fact that it is the Country's highest public house, and my bottom two gears had stopped working. It was a brisk climb in more ways than one in the growing dark. We were acutely aware that the pub stopped serving food at 8:30pm. Despite over 100 miles of riding and 10,000ft of climbing we all found the extra spurt of energy for a sprint finish upon sighting the Inn! I was slightly wary of the reception we

took our food order despite missing the 8:30pm deadline, and gave us a warm seat by the fire and a cold beer to enjoy while discussing the day's adventures. We duly did this until the food arrived, which was devoured in a few minutes of focused silence.

The advantage of staying overnight at the highest pub in the country is that Day Two started with a nice, long downhill. We set out under azure skies and they pretty much stayed with us for the whole day. We soon picked up the River Swale and were enjoying the wonderful sights, sounds and smells of God's Country. My gears were still not behaving so this necessitated a stop at Fremington at the Dales Bike Centre. New cables fitted and a gear service carried out while we en-

Northallerton through to Os-motherley and our third National Park: The North York Moors. This was pretty much our home territory now so we knew what to expect: steep climbs, fun descents and great scenery. A mix of road and trails took us past the beautiful Cod Beck Reservoir and deep into the Moors. Though the altitude doesn't reach quite as high as the Lakes, the lay of the land means that to traverse the Moors constant ascending and descending is required. Our final climb might have been rideable had we



not already got 150 miles in the legs, but at least it was only our second hike a bike in two days. The final decent may have been a bridleway, or may have been a stream, none of us were sure.

Once we saw the distant but distinctive shape of Roseberry Topping 'The Yorkshire Matterhorn' - which is only five miles from

pleting a challenge like this is a psychological game rather than a physical one that the only time any of us started to flag was on the seven easy road miles back home to Guisborough in the pitch black. Again, it was a slightly surreal feeling saying: "Good ride, see you Wednesday" to Alan as I turned off up my street, just the same as any other ride.



home- we knew we'd cracked it. It was a surreal feeling riding some of our regular trails after pedalling all the way over from the other side of the country. We all got a bit of that 'end of ride' feeling and splashed recklessly through a ford before it dawned on us that we still had a good two hours of pedalling ahead, which would now be done with cold, wet feet. Inevitably this became two and a quarter hours due to another puncture. As we finally flew down the bank into Saltburn-by-the Sea the light was once again failing. Chris pointed out with relief that the tide was in so we wouldn't have far to pedal to the water. The irony of this after just riding 200 miles from the opposite side of the country never occurred to any of us at this stage. Anyway, we just had a short roll across the pebbles to dip a wheel in the sea and bump fists.

It says a lot about how much com-

I'd already decided to order whatever I wanted from my local Chinese takeaway. "Wow!" I exclaimed when I collected it and found that a very large cardboard box was needed to carry everything. I ate it all.

To anyone thinking about taking on a similar long ride as a challenge I'd say: do it! You don't need to be a super-fit or highly skilled rider. Good planning, correct nutrition, mechanical knowledge and a large tub of chamois cream will get you a lot further than a weapons-grade race bike and a heart like an ox.

No sooner had we finished this challenge than that evening one of us had a great idea: Coast to Coast. In a day. Though we might cheat and use road bikes this time. Watch this space...



Chris likes his challenges and I genuinely do believe that he will be doing the coast to coast on road bikes in a day challenge. I agree, watch this space.





*Go places you wouldn't
usually or haven't been
to. You never know what
you'll find.*



RIDE GUIDE LADY CANNINGS

The first day of the Easter weekend was so lovely and sunny that staying at home would have been a huge mistake (also I was hoping to escape house spring cleaning duties!). Both my partner (aka Mr Betty) and I decided to visit Lady Cannings Bike Trail in Sheffield for the second time.

The Lady Cannings Bike Trail has been opened since last summer, it was the first crowdfunded trail that has been opened in UK. During the recent floods over winter this lovely track has been in a sorry state and was closed for preservation purposes. after winter and a trail dig day – the “Blue Steel” trail reopened at the beginning of March. [NB – if you’re looking to keep

up with the trail then you can’t go wrong following the [Lady Cannings twitter feed](#)]

Lady Cannings Wood is located just outside Sheffield (south east from the center of the city). The trail is quite well hidden and the first time we went there, we got lost (I wasn’t driving I hasten to add!) and ended up somewhere near an alpaca farm. The trail is located just off the Ringinglow Road, taking left by a pub “Norfolk Arms”, which is a great place to pop for a drink after a ride. The car park is free, however it is small – so be prepared for parking in a ditch in busy periods.

To get to the trail there is a short uphill fireroad cycle. The fireroad is commonly shared with dog-walkers or nature-lovers and you can sometimes spot a cub scout swinging effortlessly through the trees – this is not a bike-only environment and care is needed to avoid



squashing someone's beloved Chihuahua

The "Blue Steel" itself is around a mile of loveliness. It is a flowy, short trail packed with features. It is a very good practice ground for beginners and intermediates alike. I found that I had a blast practicing my berms and bike control whereas Mr Betty loved practicing jumps at (what seemed to me like) incredibly fast speeds. The track is undeniably short so you can easily have fun few times over during the day and it is really best enjoyed when you session it over and over again. Personally I tried to envisage as some sort of training course for potential summer enduro races, if you loop it then essentially you are spending ten minutes on a fire road climb followed by ten minutes descending through 'trail centre' blue or red features.

Despite the long wet winter, and the flooding I referred to earlier, the trail is in really good condition. The trail was well groomed and thanks to the hard-pack gravel – very grippy. A low travel full suspension bike or a decent hard-tail will be well suited to the trail! We saw some beautiful bikes like Santa Cruz Bronson's and Yeti SB66C's but they were probably overkill for this blue trail in all honesty. Sadly on the two occasions I have visited I have yet to see another woman amongst the riders.

I personally enjoyed the pump track-y bits and I certainly challenged myself on the berms (almost fell out of a few of them!) but most of all I was petrified of the two trees that are way too close to each other for my liking (my wide 780mm Spank Bar only just fits



through the gap!).

Overall, going down Blue steel was lots of fun, however I do wish it was a little longer! For the length it is, it does not need any amenities but larger parking and at least a loo or somewhere to buy the obligatory cake slice at the end would be beneficial. If you're looking for a place to improve your skills under the cover of trees, with a variety of features to attempt, then Lady Cannings Wood is a great place to ride.

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





*"Get out there and meet people.
Ride with them. You won't regret
it... I didn't."*



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