



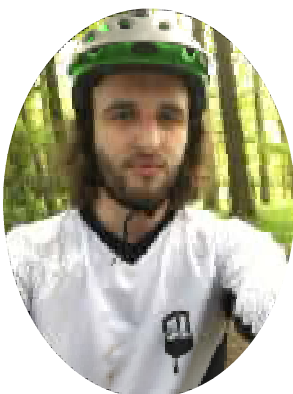
Ruide Guide
Stainburn
Forest
Raceface
Half Nelson
Grips Review



#Four



Welcome to



Welcome to our fourth instalment of our magazine. We have another selection of articles ranging from a ruide guide, a kit review and even another article written by me about filming! This one may be a little shorter than usual but its all gold! A big thankyou to everyone who contributed again!

This month's issue cover photo features myself riding a rather nice little line right in the birth of spring. It also features my new Pedalslip Jersey.



KEEP YOUR HEAD UP AND SLOW IT DOWN

Chris H-J Owner of Alliance MTB Skills Coaching takes us on a whistle stop tour of why looking up and ahead is so important and how slowing things down can help improve things for when we try to go fast. With US pro rider Sonya Looney the 2015 World 24hr Champion adding her top tips for success!

We all seek certainty, it's human nature, we have evolved and adapted to be more safely certain, of food, shelter and you know, other stuff. Yet we also long for excitement, adventure and adrenaline. In these situations we are pushing ourselves to be safely uncertain as much as possible, whilst in pursuit of the buzz taking calculated risks, based on previous learned experience, developed expertise founded on repetition.

We move through phases of learning, *unconscious incompetence* "I can't do it and I can't bloody well work out why" and then might visit a coach and feel *consciously incompetent* "I can't do it and I understand what I'm doing wrong". With some tuition and guidance you then move to *conscious competence* "I'm doing it successfully and I know why/how" until finally we become *unconsciously competent* "I can do it and I don't even think about it anymore".

At all levels of coaching I emphasise the need to keep our heads up and to keep looking at the trail ahead. Of all the skills I teach (and this is a skill) this is one of the easiest to learn and also the easiest to let slip.

"Ok" you're thinking, since when has "looking" been a skill and why is it so useful? Well the answer is as complicated as it is simple, so here are the key points.

Keeping our head up allows us to see where we are going.

Eureka a revelation! we need to see where we are going!! but let's think about this in a bit more detail. When we are nervous or scared or in the infancy of our skill (of which successfully riding a trail is one), I have noticed from experience that riders will allow their heads to drop and attempt to find safe certainty in the immediate future, the "now" of the trail.

We are told to live for the moment, but in MTB we need to be creatures of 2 worlds, people of the moment and of the next, like a chess game. Lifting our heads allows us to scan ahead down the trail

receiving and responding to visual stimulus. Improving *VISUAL REACTION TIME* allows our brain time to process the number of calculations needed and for our eyes to do their job of *EYE-HAND-BODY COORDINATION*. Our eyes are the leaders and the guide to our motor movements, so by fixating on the ground immediately in front of us we are already limiting our ability to perform a number of processes effectively.



Trust your eyes.

If you have ever been coached by myself or one of my team, you have probably been asked to look into the distance and fix your gaze on a spot whilst we walk towards you wiggling fingers, flapping hands etc. to illustrate just how dynamic our vision is. **CENTRAL PERIPHERAL AWARENESS** is the ability to pay attention to what is immediately ahead (central) and yet aware of what is to the sides (peripheral to) without having to look away from where we are going. The Foveal region of the eye, the area that allows for the sharpest detail, accounts for only 1% of the retina, therefore if we are going to keep track or on track of where we need to be in what is a dynamic and changing environment, keeping our head up deliberately teaches us to trust this key process:

- **See roots across the trail**
- **Make decision about position in relation to roots**
- **Adjust/do not adjust position on trail**
- **Look beyond roots for next movement**
- **Allow peripheral vision to perform function**
- **Instigate motor response (move) at roots i.e. "go light"**

Fixating on the "wrong thing" can often lead us to trouble.

How often have we ridden a trail, noticed an object to the side of where we are headed (a root or rock) and perceived that if struck would prove disastrous and therefore fixated more and more until we start, oddly to be sucked into its tractor beam and begin to drift towards it in blind panic. This is perhaps the reverse process of that outlined

above but a good example of the phrase "look where you go to go where you look". Skilled riders will use peripheral vision to extract information from the display as well as to determine the next fixation location or "move". This use of peripheral vision has been shown to give performers information regarding body and spatial orientation and Sivak and Mackenzie (1992) describe the contributions of the process as **pointing, reaching and grasping**.

So better **looking** lets us see things sooner and make decisions or movements in relation to these. **Advance Cue Utilisation** the ability to make accurate predictions based on this contextual information (**Perceptual Anticipation**) earlier in a sequence of events is likely to lead to a more successful outcome and limitations to reaction time or movement time such as looking down or narrowly focusing attention away from the trail are likely to lead to a negative outcome i.e. a crash or reduction in performance.

Of course we have so far missed out an important element in our development and that is skill. In order to negotiate the trail or perform a desired task, such as pumping, we must have a skill set that we can call upon in the given moment (I of course would humbly suggest that a visit to a good skills coach who understands the process of learning and works with it would be useful for most people).

There are a number of theories related to knowledge and its application in sport, one that I like a lot and that is useful to explain our learning is based on Anderson's (1983) ACT theory. Remembering that this is a light hearted article and not a sports science journal, I will let you geek out should you choose to with further reading. Suffice to say that this theory breaks expertise in performance into a number of condition-action links called productions that are responsible for triggering the right responses in specific and

appropriate circumstances, use the technique for matching the path of a bike to a landing on a gradient when doing a drop to flat and you will see evidence of this not working so well!

If the appropriate responses to a situation are located within our working memory then we can initiate a response/movement that is appropriate to that situation. The movement or "going light" over the roots we came across on the trail in our earlier process can be seen as an IF.....THEN....DO.... cycle and is successfully initiated by looking ahead to capture and process successfully the "IF" allowing us to draw on learned/developed skill "THEN", through to the action of the "DO".

Not looking well down the trail, concentrating our 1% of clear vision inappropriately and not trusting the capabilities of our peripheral vision all detract from our ability to ACT appropriately. If skill is in it's infancy we risk becoming disheartened if we don't understand that embedding learning through repetition in the correct conditions is a process. A coach highlighting when we have done something successfully at the time allows us to form a physical and tangible blueprint for action. This in turn allows us to recognise when something doesn't feel right and to say, "no that wasn't good, I didn't do... or could do" or to get feedback on how the movement might be improved.

So what can we do on the trail today to help improve?

Well if you are confident that you are doing it right or have the fundamental skill sets for a given movement here's some tips to doing it better.

Slow down. Slowing down allows us to make more mental processing space for the actions we want to take,



ALLIANCE MTB

alliancemtb.co.uk

info@alliancemtb.co.uk

07540 649340



to think about the ifs and buts of, if... then...do... and to break down in our minds why we are doing it this way and what might happen if I did it like this here etc. Deliberately calling to mind the actions we need to take for given techniques and really emphasizing the component parts for success are much more likely to be repeated at higher speeds if we have conditioned ourselves to them at lower ones, giving ourselves freedom to **look and keep our heads up**. And if you haven't already got that what I want you to do is slow down, look, keep your head up then the final tip is a good one for you.

Repetition. Practice does not make perfect, perfect practice makes perfect, so doing something badly a few times is no substitute for practicing something well often. Pick a drop or a jump and session the hell out of it then find something else.

"A lot of us never really learned how to mountain bike, we just started doing it. It can be hard to break bad habits and every single one of us has at least one area we can improve. I know that I had a bad habit of staring into the apex of a corner instead of looking through it. To break the habit, have one word you say out loud to yourself as a reminder and a mantra. Mine for cornering is "brake" (to remind myself to brake early to set my speed before the corner), then "look" to remind myself to look through the corner. It's helpful to have cues that are meaningful to you. Breathing through obstacles is also so key!"

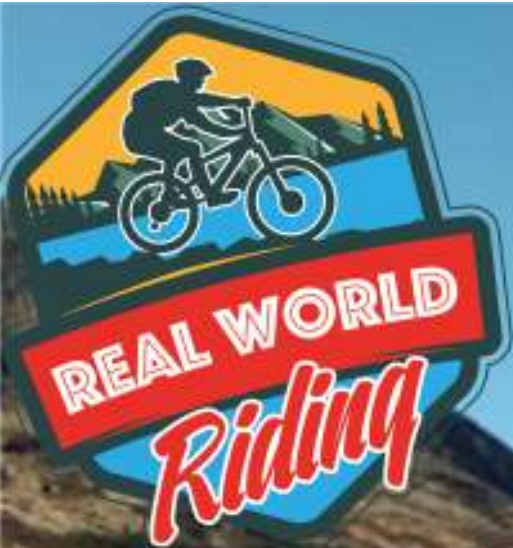
So that's it from us, remember that as scientific and technical as we want and can make things out there, the main aim is to have fun, if you're struggling to get things sorted on the trail and can't work out why, then spend some time with someone who can help, above all enjoy yourselves and take it easy. Heads up!

Chris has a BSc in Physical Education and Sports Studies and is a MIAS level 3 MTB instructor, he has worked with elite athletes studying visual anticipation in skill. He has a particular interest in sports psychology, and is working towards qualifying as a systemic psychotherapist. He and his highly skilled team of coaches operate in Nottinghamshire from their base at Sherwood Pines and work throughout the Peak District, Coaching Skills and Guiding. You can find out more about them at www.alliancemtb.com or follow @AllianceMTB on twitter or Facebook.

Pro racer Sonya hails from Albuquerque New Mexico; she has a Masters Degree in Electrical Engineering and thrives on racing endurance stage races. She has more wins next to her name than we can fit on the page but you'd do well to check her page at sonyalooney.com

Sonya Looney says:





GETTING ON YOUR BIKE

Part 3 of our Real World Riding getting started manual is finally here! We hope you enjoy!

So armed with trusty steed, we're ready to hit the trails. Where do we go first, where do we go?

I'm going to cover 'stuff' here in the order that might be covered in an introductory bike session, assuming a required level of independence on your part. If you'd much rather go through the following with a qualified and experienced coach, then I of course would be remiss in not mentioning the [Real World Guiding](#) pages where you can find just that! (advert over).

So you're stood there in a nice quiet place, not overlooked so you can't embarrass yourself, ready to go. Where do we start?

'M' CHECKING

Let's start with a good habit. Always begin with an M check. M because you

follow an M shape over the bike's frame from the bottom of the fork, up to the head-tube (where all the steering takes place), down the down tube to the pedals, then up the seat tube to the saddle, and finally down the seat-stay to the rear wheel – an M.

Following this route we check every part of the bike that we come to, to ensure the tight bits are tight and the loose bits are loose, and there's a minimum of rattle from the things in the middle. As a list we have the following:

Front wheel – attached? (don't laugh),



round (again, no sniggering at the back), tyre inflated (really? – oh yes) and with appropriate tread, anything wobbly or rattly? If fitted: Brake Disc attached firmly?

Brakes – work? (!) push the bike forward with the front brake on and the back wheel should rise.

Fork – stiff if it's supposed to be, bouncy if it's supposed to be, not rattly.

Moving up to:

Head Tube when you put the front brake on, and rock the bike backward and forward is there any rattling? – does it come from the short tube on the frame at the top of the fork? – if yes: you may need to adjust or replace the bearing at the top of the fork. You can adjust some play by loosening the stem (horizontal short tube connecting handlebars to fork), tightening up the headset bolt (vertical bolt right on top), and then tightening up the stem bolts again.

Head Tube Weld – where the short tube at the front of the bike is welded to the down-tube (that goes to the pedals) – have a look and make sure the weld is in good nick (yup, bad weld = front wheel departing on its own journey when you hit something = A&E)

Bars are they attached firmly (listen, I've ridden with folks with loose bars – it's scary) do they have bar ends (end caps)? – I'll just use the words "apple corer injury" and leave the rest to your imagination.

Then down on to the centre of the M:

Bottom Bracket (or bearing inside the frame that the pedal shaft goes through) – smooth when turning, not rattly when shoogled (technical)

Pedals – attached, they spin, they're not about to detach. Then from here at the bottom of the M, up the seat tube towards the saddle.

Seat Post – inserted into the frame



enough (there will usually be a line)

Seatpost Clamp – loose enough to just undo, stiff enough to prevent the saddle from either sinking (annoying and embarrassing) or twisting. Make sure the lever is against the post so you can't catch clothing or bits of you on it. Make sure the saddle is at a suitable height (more later).

Seat – oh yes, do make sure the saddle is firmly fixed – I've seen people trying to ride bikes with no seat, embarrassing, uncomfortable and let's face it: there's a small diameter pipe pointed at your nether regions – dangerous. Saw a seat lying on the track in front of me on the Megavalanche qualifier – someone out there was having a much *much* worse day than I was.

And finally down the seat stay (upper of the two thinner tubes that meet at the back wheel) to the back wheel, to go through the stuff you did with the front wheel.

This may seem involved, but I can guar-

antee that one day you will be thankful of spending a few minutes on this quick check – the day you are about to set out on an epic and discover your brake shoes are nearly worn away, or that your handlebars rattle a bit too much, or that your saddle is about to fall into bits; you'll thank me then.

FINALLY GETTING A LEG OVER

Ok that is admittedly quite boring if what you intended was to ride the thing, so let's get on. We'll need to set the saddle height first; so get that adjusted. Heightwise it is horses for courses; the more you want to move about (read, the steeper and rougher or bigger drops) the lower you will have your saddle, the more efficient and long lasting you want to be, the higher you want it.

STEP 1: STOPPING

Its good form to be able to stop something before you start it, working it out on your way isn't

a recipe for an easy progression, but when you've been riding on and off since you were a kid, why go back to this? Simply because brakes have come on such a long way in recent years. If the last time you rode a bike stopping involved squeezing the levers as tight as possible, and wait for the bike to stop, then your first well-adjusted hydraulic disc brake will give you a bit of a surprise. If you use them for the first time at speed, better put your underpants on the outside: you're going to be doing a superman impression off the front of the bike sometime soon.

So get used to the brakes first, start up easy until you get used to them, and gradually build up speed and speed of stopping. As you get faster, you'll feel increasingly the forward momentum pushing you forward on the bike, and you'll start to feel the fear of the superman. Good. Now we move on to step 2.

STEP 2: MOVING ABOUT

Let's face it, if you're travelling fast and wanting to brake fast, you're not going to be pedalling. So we'll start off by getting used to a neutral pedal position, and start to adopt what is often known as the attack position. This is the best 'ready for anything' position you can adopt on the bike. Getting used to it may be helped by dropping the saddle a couple of inches at first.

The neutral pedal position sees your

pedals both at the same height. Obviously you will have to have one foot in front of the other, so adopt the way round that suits you best. Snowboarders call your front foot your chocolate foot (I have no idea why). With level feet you have now lifted your body, and importantly centre of gravity up by a few inches, which has made you a little more top heavy. To allow for this, with slightly bent arms and legs (very important) we can bend forward a little to drop our centre of gravity, and allow our bum to move backward (perhaps even off the back of the saddle) to keep the CofG from moving forward.

Having adopted the attack position, we are now able to use our legs and arms as extra suspension, and to

move our CofG backward and forward over the bike, well done. As a spin-off, you can also move side to side, and this will help you stay smooth, more in a moment.

FULL USE OF THE ATTACK POSITION

I mentioned briefly the idea of your body as suspension. Even with suspension forks, if you push your riding you will rapidly get to the point that you need to use your arms, and the same for you full sussers. With a dropped saddle, you can move about very freely while stood on level pedals, so try it. Back in the car park, ride



around a bit finding the outer limits of how much you are able to move about the bike, or relative to the bike, keep your arms and legs bent, and your saddle low, and just move about (see if you can burr your bum on the back wheel while coasting, and see how far you can tip the bike on its side).

Think about the attack position as enabling you to be smooth. Smoothness is good, we like smooth. Every impact on your bike's front wheel will slow you down microscopically, and every time your body changes direction you create instability, so try to be smooth. If you watch some of these mad videos of nutters rattling down downhill trails, you can see how much they move about, in order to keep their head steady, this is what you want to emulate.

STARTING WITH GEARS

So if you're confident you can now control your bike's speed without fear of superheroes, you can adopt the attack position with ease, and use it to allow the bike to travel over rougher ground while using your arms and legs as added suspension, and can move it sideways and lean it over, then we should quickly prepare for the almost inevitable part of riding bikes down hills; riding them up hills.

Unless you're riding a single-speed bike (and if you are, then off you go then) you will have some gears. Either 8 to 10 gears at the back and 1 to 3 at the front. These days a common entry level bike will have 3 and 9. By shifting these about, then you can make life easier or harder on the ascents. You can have a play with them, at this stage the four pieces of advice I will give are as fol-

lows:

- Only change gear when you are pedalling
- Change gears well in advance of a hill so you're not pushing down hard while trying to change gear
- The above will prevent you from damaging or even breaking your chain
- Use all your front chain rings –try not to get the chain going diagonally from the inside at the front to the outside at the back (or vice versa) – more chain damage potential
- Get used to using your gears as much as possible

Now, armed with the very basics, you have enough to take your bike on a ride with some hills and to get started.



NEXT STEPS

It would be remiss of me to point out a few other things that you will need to prepare for now you're starting out. It's not a given, but it is possible that at some point you will need some protective equipment. On balance it is probably better to prepare for these eventualities than to think about them afterward and wish you'd prepared, so have a think about where and what you intend to ride, and what may be the eventualities for you.

You've started a sport with an inherent possibility of a fall, and a likelihood of a fall at speed at some point. Gravity has a way of catching up on us all, and usually when it's least expected and most inconvenient, but it can't be escaped. It's also inevitable that we only have one body, and so we should also look after it too.

As a minimum, as well as investing in your new steed, you should also begin with the following items:

- A quality cycle specific helmet. I've run one of these into a tree at 20mph (a speed that is all too easily attained) and suffered no more than minor concussion – they are worth every penny.
- A pair of gloves or cycling

'mitts' – these will help you grip the bars when you are sweating, afford a level of protection from bushes and brambles, give you some crash protection, but most importantly will retain the skin on the palm of your hand should you fall off and put your hand down (especially on estate tracks or tarmac)

- Long sleeves and long legs / tights / tracky bottoms are worth considering to save on gravel rash, but to be fair most ride in shorts and tee shirts, but are risking skin-loss. Ensure you make this decision knowingly.
- Glasses – these days industrial safety glasses are really 'quite fashionable' so you



don't need to look like a refugee from a Chemical Plant in them. All sorts of 'stuff' gets flung in your face from the trail, off your front wheel, of other people's back wheels, not to mention the bushes that might catch an eye as you whizz past. I also wear glasses to cut down on wind on my eyes which makes them water and reduces my vision drastically just when I really needed it.

It's also worth considering kneepads as soon as you start getting involved in anything trail centre orientated, or single tracked trail, as a fall at speed onto your knees can do damage that can take a long time to heal. These generally aren't worn on tracks, but again make a conscious decision about your protection levels.

There is of course a plethora of other protection offerings well into the full body armour found at Downhill biking venues. I have found recently a range from 661 of their 'Rhythm' protection which is very lightweight and very cheap at the moment which doesn't leave you feeling like an extra from Star Wars, but does afford some protection.

So, armed with a few blossoming bike handling skills and a little bit of kit and of course

your trusty steed...

WHERE NEXT?

The answer is of course entirely dependant on the answers you gave to the questions in the first article of this series. Why did you get involved in the first place? The rest of this website is aimed at those who are getting into mountainbiking and to help them get into the sport and ideally encourage them to develop their skill levels and aspirations and get out and explore. Beyond valley trails, towpaths and cycle routes, should you wish, are a network of international standard trail centres all over the UK, as well as local trails and bike parks all over.

Developing mountainbiking skills is often done at trail centres, utilising colour coded trails from Green to Blue to Red and then Black, much the same as for ski runs. There are also Orange bike park areas for specific features, in many biking venues too. Using these trails gives you a way-marked trail, with literature letting you know something of what you are letting yourself in for in terms of distance and height gained, and also an idea of the type of obstacles you



might find on the way. A green trail is best for beginning and getting to know your bike, but aimed at family cycling, many will soon outgrow this and head onto blue trails. Don't be deceived though, there can be quite a jump both physically and in terms of obstacles when you get to blue so take it easy.

Time spent on these way-marked trails for the beginner is time well spent as a skill-set can be built and confidence in those skills can be developed. This is a crucial period for those starting out and good quality coaching is really important at this stage to ensure good habits are developed and reinforced before they are really bedded in.

There's only so much that can and should be dealt with in one small article, and to this point we've hopefully got you a suitable bike for your aspirations, made sure it's not going to fall apart under you, got you basically equipped to be safe, and pointed you at a suitable venue. Finishing here leaves you now ready to engage in the sport at a point of your choosing.

This is the final instalment of our getting started series! Head over to realworldriding.com to get an idea of where you can ride!



#MTBTALK

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

HOSTED BY **@PEDALSLIP**

PEDALSLIP

WE LOVE MOUNTAIN BIKING
PEDALSLIP.COM



AN HONEST ARTICLE

Alan Storer

I've thought long and hard about this piece, but decided I need to write it, so here goes. My name's Alan, and I've been recently diagnosed with depression. I'm not looking for sympathy, but this is important. But what does it have to do with mountain biking, I hear you ask. I'll get to that.

Two years ago I was made redundant, which sucks, quite frankly, as anyone who has been in that situation knows all too well. Luckily, this gave me the opportunity to retrain to do something I'd been thinking about for a while. However, I swapped one relatively high stress job for another one. Unwittingly though, I'd created something of a perfect storm for myself. As my GP later told me, if anyone was going to suffer from depression, it was going to be me. It started to affect my work, my self-esteem, and my sleep patterns, which had always been fractured at best. Eventually I couldn't stand any more, and went to see my GP, who was brilliant. We explored a few options before the big diagnosis.

But, bikes, I hear you cry, what about the bikes? OK. Mountain biking is my escape.

I've been lucky – my depression is a relatively mild version. It could be a lot worse, I realise. Mountain biking allows me to forget all the worries, all the stresses of life. I'm so involved in the moment that I don't have the spare brain capacity to think about anything else. I often ride solo (I've written about this before), because sometimes I just don't feel up to company – it's just too difficult. That said, I do have a few good mates that I can call up when I need someone to kick my backside, and these friends are another source of strength for me – they know when I'm having a bad day, and know when to back off, or when to take the p**s.

It doesn't have to be a ride though. The first time I had to take time off work, I found a degree of peace in completely stripping down and rebuilding my hardtail – I'd been meaning to do it for months, but had never found the time. Thanks to an enforced layoff, I had time on my hands, and found the methodical work strangely comforting – I wasn't sitting around wallowing, I felt I was doing something. I wasn't beating myself up

for leaving colleagues in the lurch (I hadn't, but that doesn't mean I didn't think it)

There are days when I can't face leaving the house – thankfully though, these are few and far between, but I know that the bikes are always there, waiting for me in the garage.

PS – If anyone reading this is in a similar situation, bet hasn't sought help, please, please, speak to someone. It's not a sign of weakness. If I can seek help, so can you.

Thankyou for writing this article Alan, it must have taken real courage. Power to you buddy and his message is true, if you're struggling never be afraid to ask for help; there are people here for you!





RACE FACE HALF NELSON GRIPS

Review by Si Edwards

I love reading reviews on MTB kit, especially if I'm thinking of buying something, but often get quite confused about what is actually being reviewed! Not being a world class pro, I don't really need to know if something weighs half a gram heavier than another brand or what grade of Aluminium it was extruded from.

What I do need to know is how good it is, and is it worth the money?

To that extent I will endeavour to write some very simple and honest reviews of kit that I either own or have used. I am not a journalist but I am a rider of Mountain Bikes so each review will be based upon what I think of the product, not what the manufacturers want me to say!

Race Face Half Nelson lock on grips (£15 - £20 online)

I have recently upgraded to a Norco Fluid 7 full sus (to be reviewed soon) and like many other bikes it just needed a quick upgrade in a couple of areas. One of the first things that I changed were the

standard Norco grips to a pair of Race Face Half Nelsons.

Each grip only has one lock on collar, leaving rubber and the end cap on the outer end. This means no scratched end collar when turning the bike upside down!

The bar ends are plain plastic so I kept my Norco embossed ones which look good with the grips, but the Race Face ends are fine.

A plastic collar runs the length of the inside and this prevents the grips from slipping (or turning) despite only being locked at one end.

The rubber seems to be quite thin compared to other grips I have used but are comfortable and have never caused me any discomfort. They are quite tacky, and get tackier during the ride, so your grip remains solid.

I have had a few wipe-outs and hit several trees with my bars and so far the rubber shows no sign of damage..

The contour pattern of the grip is probably designed for perfor-

mance but to me it just looks cool. The Race Face logo should be positioned so the ends of your fingers grip onto the letters grooves which works very well providing both grip and confidence when bouncing off roots and rocks.

In all, I am very happy with these grips. They are comfy, tacky and they also look great! 5/5

il also have these grips and I must agree with Si here, they are fantastically tacky and comfy on the longer rides!

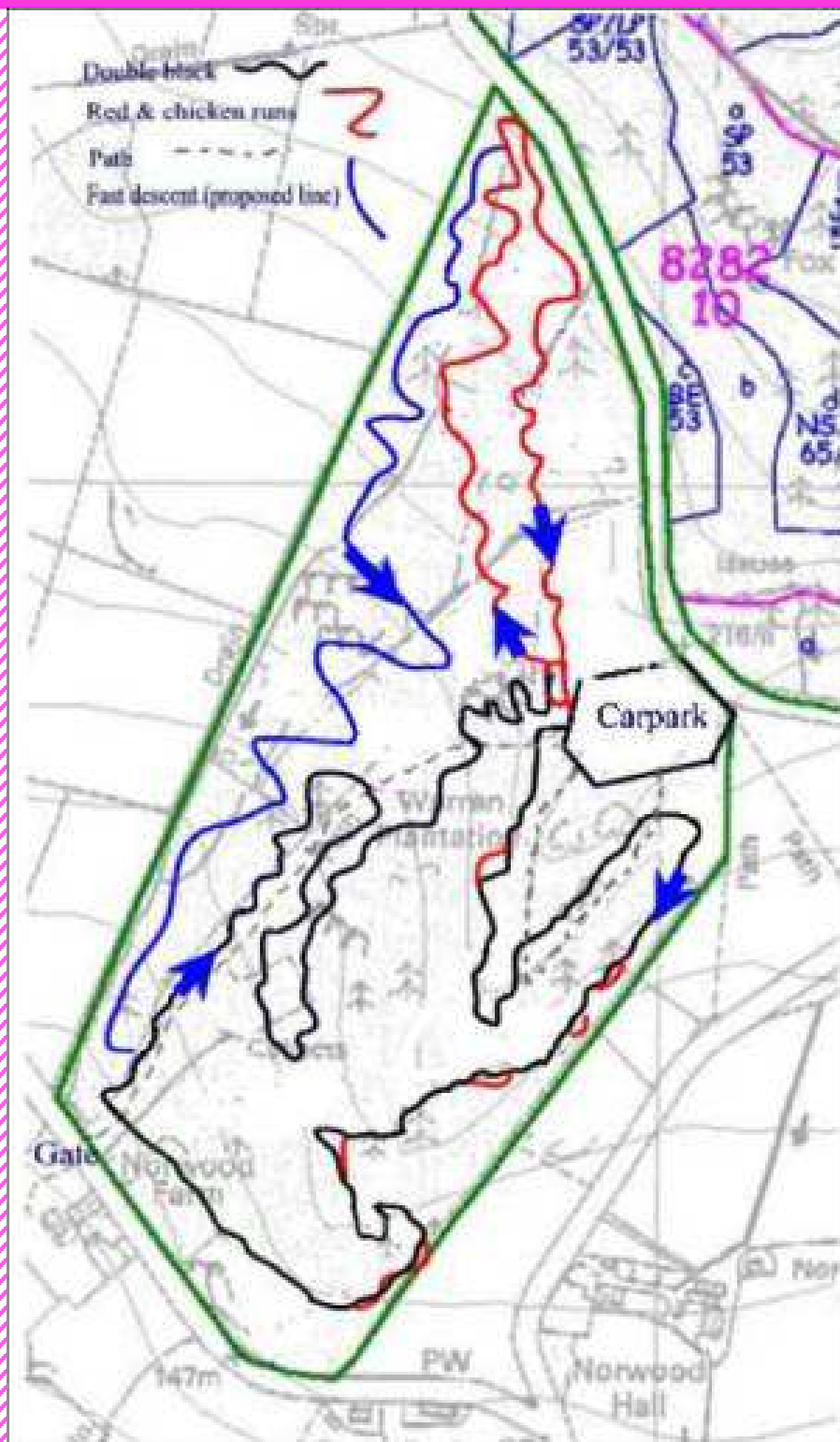






RIDE GUIDE STAINBURN FOREST

Mr Betty



I thought it was about time that I blew the lid on a relatively well kept riding secret, Stainburn Forest in Yorkshire. The series of short but technically demanding trails between Harrogate and Leeds have been ‘my local’ for the best part of five years now and they are responsible for any (small) improvements in my riding ability over that time.

You can find Stainburn near the Yorkshire village of Pool in Wharfedale, and if you are attempting to google how to get there you are probably best searching for “Norwood Edge Car Park” as this is where you’re going to want leave the car and head out on the trails. The car park can easily be missed but if you’re arriving from Leeds, via Pool in Wharfedale, then it will be on your left hand side, just look out for a bunch cars and riders. There are some dog walkers who make use of the area but there seems to be peace between the two factions generally with riders mostly sticking to the signposted bike trails.

It would be (very) wrong to refer to Stainburn as a “trail centre”. It doesn’t have a bike shop, it doesn’t have a cafe and over half the trails are ‘unofficial’ and hard to find. If you’re looking for a long “trail centre” ride then you have [Gisburn](#), [Dalby](#) and [Sherwood](#) all within roughly 1-1.5 hours from Stainburn.

So what is Stainburn for then I hear you ask? Well to me Stainburn is an excellent training ground, although i'm not quite sure what I'm preparing for. It is a series of short (1-2km) red and black runs which have been expertly constructed by the Singletraction crew and will provide a challenge for all the but the best riders. You can ride a route and then either cycle back up on a very steep and twisty single track, or if you're so inclined push back up, and do it over and over again until you've master a different feature.

There are effectively three distinct areas to the Stainburn site. Firstly there are the main trails which you can access from the Norwood Edge car park. These are steep red routes with interesting features that will keep you challenged for hours. There are also a group of official and unofficial trails (all graded black as far as i am aware) on the left of the car park which descend through the forest. Fair warning these trails are extremely challenging and primarily responsible for Stainburn's unofficial status as the most technical black trail in England. Finally there are a series of unofficial trails above the road and the car park which are steep, rooty and fairly boggy for most of the year. I would probably spend 1-2 hours at Stainburn ordinarily and would try and link up routes from all three areas in order to keep it interesting.

The trails are undoubtedly steep so you won't get much chance to pedal on the descents, and if you don't choose to push up half the time like me you may find some of the ascents too steep even for your granny ring. What Stainburn does have in abundance are rocks; unlike other trail centres the trails are littered with huge rocks to traverse and drop off, and often try to take a chunk out of your cranks or bend a pin off your pedals! Getting to the bottom of the main red trail in one piece will involve you maneuvering the bike through rock gardens

that feel more like a quarry, attempting the few remaining log rides if you so wish and treading carefully over huge exposed roots, all whilst trying to maintain your speed and momentum. It should be said that, given the terrain and the difficulty of the features, any accidents you have are generally going to end pretty badly.

What you won't find at Stainburn is jumps. Tabletops, doubles, step ups aren't really anywhere to be found on the official trails, with the exception of a recent addition on the smaller red trail, and there are very few if any on the 'unofficial' trails either. It is this absence of aerial features that i'm holding pretty much solely responsible for my awful jumping abilities. If getting airborne on smooth 'flow trails' is your sole purpose then Stainburn probably isn't for you, if you're looking for technically demanding trails with dirt, rocks and roots that you can session again and again until you've mastered them then you should definitely give it a go.

Over the years i've been lucky enough only to come off a couple of times and mostly on loose gravel on berms etc, but even for a quick ride after work I would wear knee pads and gloves as well as a decent helmet and some sort of eye protection for either the mud in the winter

or the midges in the summer.

I ride my Commencal Meta V4 RS at Stainburn and I think it is pretty well suited to the difficult and varied terrain, it reminds me a lot of some of the more technical riding i've attempted in the French Alps which a previous Commencal of mine also did very well on. You'll see an awful lot of all mountain or enduro bikes there with the uniform 160mm travel front and rear. These bikes are going to handle the numerous rock drops on the descents but you'll definitely want some decent brakes to bring you to a stop. Tyre choice at Stainburn is difficult as there is a mixture of hard pack, rock and wet dirt. Over the years I have ridden on Ardent's, High Rollers and Minions (a bit of a Maxxis fanboy I now realise) and found the Ardent's to be a good compromise between grip and speed; but whatever you're bike you're going to find something at Stainburn to suit it if you look hard enough.

Another Cracking ruide guide from the Betty's. They certainly enjoy a variety of beautiful scenery from around the country. I must say, I am very jealous.





LIGHTS CAMERA ACTION

George Hoey

Filming is something that I've tried before on a bike. However the first couple of attempts were pretty shoddy. The camera was really shaky and it kept falling down and the battery died etc. I gave up pretty quickly with my 'Faux Pro'. Lewis (@pedalslip) had a bit better luck with his actual GoPro giving a less shaky image with higher definition. Anyway this isn't a review. This is a description of a day where we decided filming was the focus, and not just documenting a ride.

Lew got in touch with me and suggested taking the cameras out to the Demo route at Dalby and taking all the various mounts that he has acquired. I was up for this as I was disappointed looking back at the previous films.

Upon arrival we thought about the best way of doing it and decided rather than sitting around planning we should ride the route, we know so well and in our minds imagine where we would want to get shots. So we did exactly that. The next time we went out would be with the cameras.

On our second way round, we took what I call the monkey tail grip which turned out to be fantastic.



This grip is fantastic at holding onto trees and dangling off branches or giving your camera some height off a ground shot.

Anyway, back to the shoot. We set out with the intention of grabbing a few shots. Little did we know. We would be stopping at a every single corner as we kept finding things to hang the monkey tail off! We were getting some killer dynamic shots of us going around berms and over jumps from multiple angles. Each time we took a shot we would re-view it to see if we had done it fast enough, smooth enough, and exciting enough to ensure that we would have the best shot possible; and if it wasn't,

we'd do it again.

As we went round, we started to think of other ways to make the film more interesting. There are a few sections on the Demo route where there are multiple sections and we decided to put a few switches in.

On the final lap of our trip we would take it in turns with the chest mount to fill in gaps and to show switches and give another point of view to the film. This gave us a new challenge in remembering where we had done the switches and which line we'd taken.

In the end a two 20 minute runs took about 5 hours of filming. But it was totally worth it, the end product looks as if we did just have a film crew set up around the whole forest filming us as we went around the track just one time. We were both highly proud of the achievement and Lew did a swell job on the editing. I'd definitely encourage any edit maker to take this approach as it is a very different experience. If you want to watch the edit, head vimeo.com/pedalslip and enjoy!





Issue #five out 17th August



If you would like to contribute in any way to this magazine then all you need to do is contact us on contact@beaconmtb.com and we'll get back to you with all the information you need. You can also follow us on twitter at: [@BeaconMTB](https://twitter.com/BeaconMTB) for news and updates, or head to www.beaconmtb.com for previous issues. Thanks for reading!