

Newforce e-newsletter

Issue 156 Spring 2021



Dear Members.

Welcome to the spring 2021 edition of Newforce. Once again the preceding months have been quiet ones for club activities (remember, due to the Covid lockdown if you're reading this in years to come when hopefully all the current restriction are just a distant memory) but hopefully most of you have been getting out singly or in the permitted pairs. Personally, I've kept the Thursday night tradition alive, riding as one half of a pair or on my own with as far as I can remember, just one week missed since this malarky began. Dedicated, stubborn or sad? Make your own mind up.

At the time of writing the winter wetness ceased a few weeks ago and local trails have now gone a long way towards drying out so off road rides have become cleaner fun, although ironically bike cleaning is if anything a little harder as the mud we do find has time to dry whilst riding and stick more stubbornly than in constant wetness when it would fall off at the mere sight of a hosepipe.

Club rides have now restarted, the evenings are light and pub gardens are open so we are definitely seeing the light at the end of the tunnel. A bit of warmth wouldn't go amiss or am I just being greedy there? And now that club rides have started I'll issue my usual reminder for you to take photographs whilst out on them and maybe write a few words if you enjoyed it or anything unusual happened.

Happy riding.



# So You Want To Buy A New Bike This Year?

By Keith Whitten

Well good luck with it, although finding one might not be as easy as in previous years and you're very unlikely to find anything significantly, if at all, discounted. It's been well documented that one side effect of the Covid pandemic has been a big increase in numbers of people cycling. New bikes have been bought in unprecedented numbers and old bikes have been dragged out of sheds, garages and even ditches (by the look of some that have tuned up at my shop) to be repaired and put back to use. The result is a whole host of shortages in the cycling supply chain. I'm currently two months into a three month wait for 8 speed cassettes and many chainsets and chain rings are currently unobtainable. Those are just the first examples that sprung to my mind. Last year's cycling equivalent of toilet rolls were inner tubes with mountain bike and hybrid sizes being very scarce at times. It was quite obvious then that a good many of my customers had last ridden maybe twenty years ago as plenty of them were buying water bottles and cages, hardly any asked for hydration packs. A number asking for mountain bike tyres and tubes were quite mystified when I asked them what size wheels they had. "Well it's a mountain bike, it's 26 innit".

It's not just the UK that's seen demand for cycling products rocket, Europe and America are just the same and the factories in south east Asia that make most common cycling consumables just can't keep up. The following are a selection of quotes from emails sent by several of my suppliers:

From Upgrade, importer and supplier of Kinesis bikes, DMR, Pivot etc

We are working hard to secure more stock to keep up with demand, however, like all other brands we are being quoted longer production lead times for our Asian sourced product.

Additionally; as you may have read in the news there is a global container 'shortage' meaning all shipments from Asia are taking longer than normal, plus extra border controls and checks have slowed down our inbound shipments for our EU sourced stock.

We are working tirelessly to improve the situation, however, many of the issues above are out of our control.

From Merida Bikes UK (sent January 2021)

## Component Shortages

We are limited not by manufacturing capacity but by supply and distribution issues.

Lead times continue to increase; they're generally 3-4 months longer than normal with some parts much longer still. A new order for Shimano today will have a '22 in the delivery date. We expect disruption to continue throughout the MY22 season. Component suppliers are introducing no cancellation / no adjustment rules.

# Container Shortages

You'll have seen news coverage of delays at Felixstowe and general shipping problems pre Xmas.

Our factory has minimal capacity to hold bikes; they're usually shipped as soon as they've been produced. The global container shortage resulted in us leasing a bonded warehouse at the port to store bikes awaiting containers.

Supply and demand has pushed the price of a 40' container from c \$2,000 to over \$8,000

Merida negotiate a global contract; this at least ensures that our containers are guaranteed to sail once they're filled. Others aren't as lucky.

We've extended our best guess dates to take account of the buffering at both ends.

## Price Increases

These keep coming.

Component prices are increasing across the board. This trend is likely to continue, placing additional pressure on pricing for distributors. Currency is playing a part; currency pairings can ease or exacerbate the problem.

You'll have seen the criticism of TNT for increasing prices massively; all carriers are in a similar position as bikes are in growth and classed as "ugly freight".

Costs are increasing across the board for all businesses, there has been plenty of coverage of the red tape costs post Brexit.

Ah yes, Brexit. Early this year I had a customer asking me to source replacement skirt guides for his bike. He called them 'coat guards', I don't think he makes a habit of wearing skirts. I couldn't find stock of them with any of my regular UK based suppliers but eventually found a company 'Dutch Bike Bits' based in the Netherlands who had them available. In the basket they went and I clicked my way to off to checkout. Entering the delivery address I clicked the drop down box for 'country' and was presented with over a hundred choices; England – no that's not there, Great Britain – no that's not there, United Kingdom – no that's not there either. Eventually I found the following statement.

### **Britain in 2021**

Unfortunately, we will not be able to send parcels to the UK from mid December 2020 onward. Quite apart from uncertainty due to Brexit surrounding the shipping cost, taxation etc. after that time, there is also a problem caused by [the British government deciding to impose a unique taxation regime](#) which will require every company in the world in every country in the world outside the UK which exports to the UK to apply and collect British taxes on behalf of the British government. For providing this service they intend to charge a fee to every company in the world in every country in the world which exports to the UK. Clearly this is ludicrous for one country, but imagine if every country in the world had the same idea. If every country decided to behave in the same way then we would have to pay 195 fees every year, keep up with the changes in taxation law for 195 different countries, keep accounts on behalf of 195 different countries and submit payments to 195 tax offices in 195 different countries, and jump through whatever hoops were required to prove that we were doing all of this honestly and without any error.

Therefore from mid December 2020 onward we ship to every country in the world... except the UK.

We have many customers within the UK and would like to be able to trade with them. Not being able to send parcels to the UK does not work in any way in our favour and it is not what we wanted. We are forced by British policy to stop dealing with British customers. If you're angry about this, and you may well be so, please contact your elected representative in the UK.

If you're reading this on any electronic device with internet access you should be able to click the link to the Gov.uk web page referenced. If you do and you can really understand it all, please explain it to me sometime. Sometime when there's really not much else going on would be best.

So if you're in the habit of buying discounted bike parts from the big European sellers you may not find them quite so heavily discounted this year, if what you want is even available at all and finding a shiny new bike may take a bit of hunting. Checking cassette availability with the UK online sellers as I write this reveals that they appear to have a few more options available than the official UK trade suppliers but also a very high proportion of products listed as 'no stock'. So if you don't think your cassette, chain and chainring(s) will last the summer I'd suggest buying replacements now if they're available and keeping them on the shelf until needed.

The conclusion from all the above information appears to be that a cycling boom isn't necessarily the best thing for all of us regular riders when it comes to feeding our appetite for both consumable parts and bling (I found out recently that Hope Brakes are now on a ten week waiting list). Another side effect is that the cycle lanes and paths have become more congested, particularly with folk who don't seem to mind which side they ride on and weave about seemingly at random. But that's entirely another grumble.



# Club Ride – Martin – 20<sup>th</sup>Dec 2020

By Martin Wheat

Wow. What a morning.

If yesterday's rain wasn't sufficient warning of moist conditions below tyre, the paddle across my lawn to the car was. Still, the sun was shining and the forecast was for more of that.

Only three of us were signed up but a group of walkers reminded us how tight parking is if everyone has to drive separately.

A steady rise to the first cross-roads/trails warmed us up, and it wasn't long before we shed a layer. The trails all seemed pretty firm until half way down the first hill where the slithery chalk mud and minor ruts made things quite exciting. ... and that was the way it went for the rest of the ride: nice grippy grass interspersed with slithery ruts filled from time to time with water. We came across a couple of young lads looking at a sump big enough to block the way. Paul ploughed off through it and made it through, with water to the axles and very wet feet. Pete and I crept around the edge. We wondered whether the lads gave it a go, careless of the reception they'd get at home. Certainly by the time we returned to the parking our bikes and we looked the way they tend to after a such a ride.

Many thanks to Pete for bringing a flexible route taking us over Blagdon hill, Toyd down, Gallows Hill, Braemore House and Whitsbury Down. We were surrounded by big open countryside, with long views under clear blue skies – magic! – though staying upright distracted us from that some of the time. No punctures; no breakdowns, so all in all a fine outing.

Back home, Jan asked whether it had been worth it. Oh yes!



# Newforce Committee Meeting Minutes

Held via Zoom at 8:00pm on Tuesday 9th March

Attendees:

Roger Shephard, Eleanor Rutter, Sue Marsland, Nick Clark, Karen Clark, Stu Rogers, Ian Taylor, Martin Wheat.

Apologies: Steve Keith

The previous minutes were accepted as a true record.

## 1. Club Secretary

Vacancy not yet filled.

Sue to post ad on Facebook.

Ian to arrange for Cycling UK invoice to come to the Treasurer.

## 2. Rides

Restarting rides based on the Government's published road map was discussed. This will be kept under review. Subject to any further guidance from the Government and/or Cycling UK the anticipated ride formats and dates are as follows:

**11<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 9<sup>th</sup> May** – Groups up to 6 with ride leaders choosing the start point and pace following the format of last summer.

On 17<sup>th</sup> May Government guidance potentially allows groups up to 30 to meet. Rides to follow the pre-Covid format i.e. start points to be nominated, except people will be asked to post on the BB that they wish to join the ride. Rides will be open to non-members up to a maximum of 5 per ride.

**23<sup>rd</sup> May - Wooton Bridge**

**6<sup>th</sup> June - Danebury**

**20<sup>th</sup> June – East Winchester P&R** NB this is the official name of the P&R we start from according to Google Maps.

On 21<sup>st</sup> June the Government will potentially remove all legal limits on social contacts so the rides will return to the pre-Covid format. However it was decided that for the first two rides people would still be asked to register on the BB to avoid having to manage a possible post-Covid surge. Max non-members 5 per ride.

**4<sup>th</sup> July – Ashurst** Riders to be asked to register via the BB

**18<sup>th</sup> July – Bishops Waltham** Riders to be asked to register via the BB

**1st August – Whitchurch** No Covid restrictions

**15<sup>th</sup> August – Moyles Court** No Covid restrictions

**29<sup>th</sup> August – Martin Down** (Car park at SU 037 201 on A354) No Covid restrictions

### 3. **Trips**

The Brecon Beacons trip was scheduled for the first weekend in June but this can't now happen.

Sue to explore dates in early September.

### 4. **Membership**

It was agreed to re-instate membership fees effective from the 23<sup>rd</sup> May ride.

It was further agreed to reduce the price of an individual annual membership to £12 from this date and to withdraw the multi-year membership options.

NB Although it was not discussed the pro-rata reduction in family membership would result in an annual cost of £18 would anyone not supporting this please make their views known

### 5. **Social**

Nothing planned due to Covid restrictions.

### 6. **AOB**

What3words to be used as a reference for start points in addition grid references.

### 7. **Next Meeting**

8<sup>th</sup> June 2021 – Roger Shephard to set up via Zoom unless restrictions eased.