

Issue 565

April 2021

# Cranks Volume 48

The magazine of  
**Deeside Thistle Cycling  
Club**

Sponsored by:



**Tierney Strachan**  
PROCESS CONTROL ENGINEERING

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**Current Membership 563 (589)  
SCU Membership 300 (327)**

## Editorial:

It's a year since I first wrote in this editorial about following Coronavirus Guidelines. Little did I suspect a year on we'd still be restricted. In the editorial I mentioned being out on a run and coming into Oyne getting a cheery greeting from Stuart and Jackie Fraser. This morning, again out for my constitutional, and again approaching Oyne, it was a pleasure to get the same shout of encouragement from the same duo. Is this the proof that I only go out once a year?

Also heartening is the re-establishment of official runs. Andy Kerr, out of Kintore, and David Stewart, out of Banchory, are promoting organised sessions, albeit with the strictures of SPOND registration.

Then there's the Evening League. Steve Walton is straining at the traces, waiting on the command from our controllers that competition with reasonable numbers is allowed. The Calendar for 2021 is in this issue of Cranks and though some of the early events might not happen, action will start when permissions are granted.

Alan Campbell, too, is enthusiastic that 2021 will see a return to some normality. He's scheduling the annual Spring Classic Reliability Trial for a Sunday in May. Hall use for HQ and catering might not be possible. He has alternatives such as feeding from the back of a van.

## PHILOSOPHER'S CORNER

***Maintaining a positive attitude might not solve all your problems; but it will annoy enough people to make it worthwhile***

Do you have a view on life? Why not submit your favourite few words of wisdom for public consumption in this exclusive corner of your magazine. Send now to Sandy Lindsay, Rowan Cottage, Inveramsay, Inverurie, AB51 5DQ or email [knockies@aol.com](mailto:knockies@aol.com)

## Coronavirus Update

On 05 April revised guidance came into effect in Scotland. How this affects our sport and activity basically remains the same though there has been some easing for under 18s.

The up to date COVID-19 Guidance is available here: <https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/scotland/article/20200313-Scottish-Cycling-Coronavirus-COVID19-Guidance-0>

**Please take care to follow the rules, to not offend.**

## Re-establishment of Club Rides

As we ease out of restrictions there will be the opportunity to start up club rides once more. Already, Andy Kerr has tested the water with the Donside Bunch out of Kintore. He has processes in place so that there is a track and trace trail if required. This is done through Spond and all participants must register before taking part.

At the moment club rides are for members only to ensure we comply with the guidance and to ensure we have a means to record who's turning up to rides and have suitable contact information, etc. Any non-member wishing to get involved can find more information about club membership here: <http://deeside.org/members/>

In Banchory Evening Rides are scheduled to open up into Spring and Summer. All rides will be organised through Spond. Register on SPOND via:

- a) <https://club.spond.com/landing/signup/deesideadults>
- b) When you register select the Banchory Rides group.
- c) You must download and read the Terms and Conditions and you must consent to follow the terms and conditions for riding under COVID-19 restrictions.
- d) The Group Admins will approve your membership.

Anyone who is already registered on Deeside Adults Spond can request entry to the Banchory group with the code TTADU.

Any issues with sign up let me know on [dgstewart3dgs@gmail.com](mailto:dgstewart3dgs@gmail.com)

## George Sinclair

For many years as Chairman of the local Association, George Sinclair guided cycling in our area. A prominent Aberdeen Wheeler he first joined them in 1946 and with his contacts was able to support many joint club activities.

At 93 years of age, and after a long illness, George died in hospital on Thursday 18 March.

In his day, an able time-triallist and track rider, he went on to be a live-long member of the Wheelers and supported the development of many of the club members.

Not only committed to his club he also gave freely of his time to organise local Association events and was also one of our principal timekeepers.

Our thoughts are with his wife and family.

## **Last Weekend of February**

### **What it used to mean to us**

The superb weather of the weekend of 27/28 February 2021 got me thinking! It was sunny and warm, very warm for February at a remarkable 14°C. So many cyclists out on the roads. Many with shorts and short sleeves even.

The last Sunday in February was the date of The Reliability Trial for decades. 100 miles - no options. There was a minimum average speed and a maximum. If you exceeded an average of 15.5mph you would be likely to be disqualified. Nobby Clarke was very clear about that. Of course, you had to have mudguards. That wasn't an issue back in the day because that's how bikes were.

Now, you may well ask, why would there be a 100 miler in February? The answer is that in Scotland the racing season started with 10-mile Time Trials on the first Sunday of March. Because there were events every weekend of the season until October it seemed "sensible" to organise Reliability Trials for that weekend in February.

Needless to say the weather was often totally unsuitable. Snow, ice and rain were not unusual. Sun like the last weekend in February this year and no wind was unusual, but I do remember, back in the late 1970s, sitting on a wall in Banchory with an ice cream putting in time so that we didn't get back to The Mill Inn ahead of time! That was unusual.

I also remember sitting on Sandy Lindsay's wheel in the teeth of a blizzard as we headed from Crathie to Ballater during one edition.

I have an old friend who still mourns the melting of his nylon jacket as he stood very close to the open fire at the Huntly Arms Hotel in Aboyne in a desperate and fruitless attempt to get feeling back in the limbs before the last 20 miles.

Restrictions permitting, we will have our Reliability Trial, aka Spring Classic, before the end of May 2021. **AGC**

## **Aberdeen Boulevard**

The controversial temporary cycle lanes installed around Aberdeen's Beach area have been removed.

A public outcry suggested that far from being an asset they made it more dangerous for other users. Car drivers could not park next to the kerb meaning that the occupants had to disembark into the traffic lane or onto the cycle lane.

The temporary lanes have been replaced. Cyclists now have their own delineated carriageway.

Permanent markings have been painted on the roadway. This means cyclists have their own space, leading to much safer passage. Whether or not other users of the beach area will make favourable comment is yet to be seen.

## **Webinar Survey**

Over the past year your club has put on several Webinars with Alan Campbell and Laura Sarkis interviewing well-known personalities as well as bike mechanic presentations.

To determine how well they went, Peter Smart sent a survey questionnaire to participants.

There were 33 responders and a summary of their replies is [here](#).

## **Saturday Virtual Rides**

The club's first virtual ride using "local roads" on the RGT Cycling platform went quite well. We had a couple of technical problems as you might expect on the first go but, overall, it was quite a successful event with everyone getting a good workout.

We're going to run additional events like the full Classic route (Banchory, SDR to Dinnet, Ordie, Tarland, QV, Lumphanan, Torphins, Glassel, Banchory), and we can maybe have a coffee over Zoom afterwards.

If you'd like to join in, please email me at [DTCC.Banchory.Saturday@outlook.com](mailto:DTCC.Banchory.Saturday@outlook.com) **Steve Brechin**

## **Youth Free Membership**

Deeside Thistle Cycling Club is delighted to offer free membership to new youth riders for their first year. If you would like to take advantage of this offer, please see: <http://www.deeside.org/membership.html>

## **Notes for Cranks**

My ability to find suitable material to fill the pages of your monthly magazine, Cranks, becomes more and more difficult.

With the Coronavirus curtailing most of the regular activities there has been little to write about.

You may be able to help. I'm sure there are many of you who have been involved in all sorts of things during lockdown which might be of interest to others.

How about penning a few lines and sending it through to [knockies@deeside.org](mailto:knockies@deeside.org).

## **KNOCKBURN LOCH MANAGEMENT**

John Huston Knockburn Site Manager, Knockburn Loch, Strachan, AB31 6LL [info@knockburn.co.uk](mailto:info@knockburn.co.uk), 01330 822234 / 07741314999 [www.knockburn.co.uk](http://www.knockburn.co.uk). You can like us on [FaceBook](#) and follow us on [Twitter](#)

## 24hr Charity Cycle for Kayleigh's Wee Stars

I decided to do something for charity and settled on a cycle for 24hrs and raise money for Kayleigh's Wee Stars. I opted to do this with a combination of riding outside, and inside on Zwift.

My plan was to undertake the NE250 route and then complete the time in the garage. I went for Sat 10th April originally starting at 6am but pushed this back and started at 7am to get a bit more warmth from the sun.

I had Deeside member Nicky Moir join me from the start and although the weather forecast had improved it still looked challenging with 100km of a headwind!

Anyway, we set out at 7:05 and headed off with the westerly wind hitting us with snow and some of the roads down to a few sections to cycle. We took our time and stayed upright!

Heading north to Cruden Bay then onto Peterhead, along the coast via Fraserburgh and Roseharty we reached our first stop at Banff.

This stretch was really grim at times, as it was wet and cold and complete with the headwind. My mum and dad provided some support using their motorhome.

I originally planned to stop for 15 mins, but that just wasn't enough time with it being so cold. We took our time to properly refuel.

We headed off again along to Portsoy, Cullen, Portknockie, Findochty, Buckie then on to Portgordon. Nicky was peeling off between this and Spey Bay, then I was solo to Rothes and in to Tomintoul for the planned second stop.

Arriving at Tomintoul the weather was closing in with more snow showers. Feeling fine I decided to keep going and moved the stop to the other side of the Lecht. With some great downhill and a few speed wobbles at 80kph + I reminded myself this was an endurance day.

After the stop and refuelling on to Crathie via Gairnshiel. This was my low point.

Struggling in the climb with a sore knee I'd to reduce the power a little. Up and over then on to North Deeside Road all with the planned use of the tailwind. I was glad the plan came off and took the opportunity of the tailwind.

Headed through to Aboyne and then met by my mate, Steve Rae, a few miles from Banchory and my planned third stop. It was great to have company again. It really helped with the motivation!

I was joined by my son from The Lecht and he was keeping a close eye on me!

A short break and refuel and off. We were met by another friend, Stu King. Steve stopped at Peterculter.

Then a slight change in plan as I was really struggling with a sore knee so opted to head into Aberdeen and avoid some of the hills.

Heading out of town for the last hour and approaching 9pm we headed into the dark with little snow flurries.

I was glad to get to Newburgh at 10pm to be met by my family and my dad who drove over to see me finish.

Part A complete. 345km with 3,300m of climbing and an average of 28kph. I refuelled, then went out to clean my bike, I was met by lots of snow, the roads were fully covered. Really lucky but great timing.

Starting indoors on Zwift at 11pm it was great to have some company through the night with a few of the guys that ride with Kayleigh's Wee Stars in the Thu TTT. I only had a spell of around 45 mins myself.

I finished at just past 7:05 for 24 hours of cycling covering 161km and 2100n in Part B, having chosen a hilly route to help keep the focus through the evening. Maybe a mistake!

I was riding for Kayleigh's Wee Stars and managed to raise close to £1500. A great result plus a claim for match funding via my work will hopefully take me to over £2000.

Sunday has been a lazy day. Walked my dog and had a few hours kip. Awaiting a takeaway and a few beers and an early night!

What a great loop with some stunning stretches of roads and some stunning views! I would certainly recommend this route for an epic cycle trip whether in one go or with a few days.

*Mark Walker*

## Zpring Bunny 21st April

In the absence of the annual Time Trial season opener (for obvious reasons), we are taking to Zwift again for a charity Time Trial supporting Kayleigh's Wee Stars.

Enter: <https://www.zwift.com/events/view/1981958>

Donate: [www.justgiving.co.uk/fundraising/zpringbunny](http://www.justgiving.co.uk/fundraising/zpringbunny)

Here are some of the prizes that you could win if you make a donation and get yourself on the start line.

2 x £200 coaching vouchers from @ardoyneperformance

2 x mixed cases of beer from @sixdnorth

2x muc-off cleaning kits from @rembikes

2 x Hoody/bottle/buff packs from. @kayleighsweestars

2 x Deeside Thistle race jerseys from @deesidethistlecc

2 x @pactimo\_official vouchers

Various awesome goodies courtesy of @grit\_n\_glory\_coaching

Some @orchidcocktails and a wiggle voucher courtesy of www.olwg.co.uk

To be eligible for a prize, you need to be zwiftpower registered, have a genuine power source and make a donation to our chosen charity (please make sure your zwift name matches your donation name) *Andy Kerr*

## Synopsis of Meeting 12/04/2021

A Finance and Management Committee meeting took place on-line, on Monday 12 April 2021. In attendance were Andrew Harrington, Sandy Lindsay, Colin Esslemont, Sam Long, Neil Stables, Jon Strachan, Mark Walker, David Walton and Steve Walton.

Apologies – David Eastwood, Laura Sarkis, Peter Smart

- 1 **Minutes of Previous Meeting** – Accepted as correct record
- 2 **Business Arising from Minute**
  - a) **Social Media Person** – Further requests to be made
  - b) **Watches** – The numbers of club watches is to be assessed and additional timepieces purchased
  - c) **MTB Event** – Kirkhill is not viable for a major event
- 3 **New Business**
  - a) **Evening League** – A calendar for 2021 has been prepared but the league cannot commence until Scottish Cycling gives the go ahead which seems imminent. Riders are to be issued with one number which will be used event to event. Routes for all courses are to be redrawn for use on Strava. Carparking is to be requested at halls even if the indoor facilities are not available. Riders are to be advised to show discretion in the use of toilet facilities. Hopefully the Covid restrictions will not deter volunteers
  - b) **Race Prizes** – It was agreed that there should be equality in race prizes between gender and that the club should sign up to the movement supporting this
  - c) **Webinar Survey** – Results from this are to be published
  - d) **MTB Update** – A new venue for a major SXC event is possible in the vicinity of Pittodrie House. A meeting will take place with the manager. Dave Dougan has reconnoitred a suitable course. There is interest from Glentanar Estates for a Mountain Bike Marathon in Glentanar which could be part of the British Cycling National Series
  - e) **Youth Update** - New fees and funding model operational. A small number of riders opted not to continue. We anticipate new members likely to join in coming months, mostly in younger age groups Sessions currently running, COVID Compliant: Ride to Race (2 road going groups), Juniors (1 road going group), Athertons (various groups, MTB). Not running: Learn to Ride  
Aberdeenshire (regional) sessions, organised with Grampian Tigers and Ythan on Thursday nights, due to recommence 24.04.2. Road and track focus  
Coach Development. We will need to bring in a new cohort of Coaches, for both road and off road disciplines. Our budget will be tight for this, despite funding increase from main Club. Need to move

model on to support full payment of Coach qualifications, not limited funding as in the past  
F&M Committee representative: Coaches preference that this be a Junior, but currently undertaking exams.  
Park

Tour of Britain. Y&J would ideally like see some local races in the lead up to this. Not keen however on events to be held during the day  
New webpage content to be arranged with Webmaster. Y&J not currently represented on main site and probably blind to new members  
Discussion that it might be beneficial to discuss collaboration between M&F RR teams and the Junior riders. B Lyons to liaise with Mark Walker, possible Teams call

### 4 **Next Meeting – 03 May 2021 at 7.00pm**

**A Lindsay (Secretary) 12 April 2021**

## Club Officials

We're in a bit of a quandary. Your Finance and Management Committee (that's the group of members who work to keep your club running) are not up to strength.

To ensure all our Championships are properly calculated we need a Championship Secretary. This person looks after the race results during the year and works out who wins what.

Then there's our Events Secretary. This position works hand in glove with the Championship Secretary and can even be the same person though two folk helps spread the load. This official ensures that all the club promotions follow correct procedures and assists in sourcing race personnel and equipment.

Finally, there's our Social Media Person. We're looking at this position taking over the Press Secretary duties. He or she will be expected to have regular input to the various social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, etc) as well as releasing notes to the press.

If you are interested, why not drop a note to [info@deeside.org](mailto:info@deeside.org) to let us know.

## Ride The North

**Half price** places available for anyone interested in fundraising for #TeamAC.

Aberdeen Cyrenians is a local, independent charity that has been tackling homelessness for over 50 years. We provide valuable support and assistance to individuals and families that are homeless or at risk of losing their home. Tickets can be purchased through the following link:

[Ride the North for Aberdeen Cyrenians Tickets, Huntly | Eventbrite](#)



## Virtual Cycle Event - Tour De Forth

It's free to register online for the Tour de Forth via the link and all the information regarding distances etc. is in there. For anyone who raises £100 for NorthSound Cash for Kids they will gain free entry to the actual event on the 6th June 2021 (COVID restrictions allowing).

Please note that if you follow the link and do want to sign up make sure to click on the "To enter NorthSound Cash for Kids set your page up [HERE](#)"

<http://www.tourdeforth.com/virtual?fbclid=IwAR37rgijhI7E37qYVu0yKGOAdgQwW2Rnb8O9jkq9LnA2TFeafcdsfQ3ViiY>

We are a local charity which supports children who are sick, disabled or disadvantaged within Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Tour De Forth is such a great event and we are excited to have the opportunity to still do this virtually and get it out there to all our local cycle groups. *Louise Douglas*

### CTT Events 2021

See below a link for a list of events proposed for 2021 Handbook

Can you all please note that we will be compiling a Short Distance BAR in 2021 but we will not be asking the organisers for the district levy of £1 as was proposed and accepted for 2020.

**Attachments available for download:**

[CTT Scotland 2021 Events](#)

## Zwift Sunday Club Endurance Ride

Created and administered by Simon Stromberg

We now have a Sunday Club Endurance Ride on Zwift, with different groups at a different pace. Details [here](#). This is run in partnership with ZwiftScotland group.

There will be different groups formed on ride each at a different pace. Regrouping at top of KOMs.



[ZWIFT.COM](http://ZWIFT.COM)

## Car Clinic Offer

A special offer has been made to companies who want to set up staff discount schemes for their employees which allows them to register their own details and get discount automatically when they visit Car Clinic. It has been a roaring success and I thought that maybe I should extend to include members of the Deeside Thistle. Please follow this link for register detail <https://www.car-clinic.co.uk/employee-discount/> *Sandy Wilson*

## New Members

The following new or returning members have joined in recent weeks

1942	Roddy MacPherson	Aberdeen	50
2063	Matthew Smith	Westhill	24
2690	Alan Duguid	Oldmeldrum	47
2713	Malcolm Lang	Kemnay	35
2996	Andrew Shepperson	Westhill	38
2997	Timothy Ledger	Banchory	13
2998	Jacob Smith	Johnshaven	17
2999	Grant Burnett	Aberdeen	40
3000	Pete Matthews	Aberdeen	39
3001	Tim MacLaren	Kintore	39
3002	Paul Berryman	Inverurie	40

Any friend, family member, work colleague, who is interested in cycling but not involved with a club, should be dropped the hint to look at [www.deeside.org/members](http://www.deeside.org/members) or to email [members@deeside.org](mailto:members@deeside.org) asking for information.

## Youth Free Membership

Deeside Thistle Cycling Club is delighted to offer free membership to new youth riders for their first year. If you would like to take advantage of this offer, please see: <http://www.deeside.org/membership.html>

## Ride Etiquette Document

You are reminded that a paper detailing the etiquette to follow when on club/training runs has been prepared and is [here](#) for your interest. The document is posted on the club's website and links will start to appear on club publications so that you can refer to it. It will also be highlighted to new members.

## Welfare Officers

Club Welfare Officers are Ian Wilson and Anna Liversidge. They can be contacted by telephone on 07919 280656. The email address to use is [welfare@deeside.org](mailto:welfare@deeside.org)

## 25 Years Ago

### SUPERMAN POSITION

Invited by Mike Ward to attend the opening of Grampian Transport Museum on 31 March gave me much pleasure. Graeme Obree's bike is on display in Alford and permission had been granted through contact with Scotoil and Graeme for it to be ridden in the opening ceremonies.

The bike on display is the original, a track model, minus front wheel. A road wheel had been rushed north to Graeme's sponsor and Ian Davidson had hurriedly modified the front axle so that it would fit into the forks. This left the axle poking out past the ends but in my capacity as chief cook and bottle washer for the day I filled the space with washers. The bike was rideable just as the opening speeches came to an end.

Carrying it onto the track gave me a funny feeling. Even more when I tried to slip my feet into Graeme's shoes. A tight squeeze but I made it. Francie Duguid and Elliott Kinch held me up and as I took pressure on the pedals the whole shooting match cobbled over to one side. Like a real amateur on the rollers, I was about to land on the floor. Elliott's strong arms pushed me upright. What the hell thought I, it's only a bike, and hit the pedals. It surged forward. Francie ran beside me and took up a saving position on the banking lest I overshot.

On that first lap of the track my journey was slow and controlled. The second saw me push a bit harder and have to kick back as I approached the shallow banking on the corners. The third and I'd lowered myself and started to stretch out along the tri-bars. With an extended top tube and the bars at their limit it's a long way to the front of the bike. Soon I was looking straight down at the front axle and still some way to go. On lap four I'd made it to the Superman Position.

The feeling was incredible. Far from being as uncomfortable as it looks, to stretch your arms out and have them supported feels quite natural. Perhaps most disconcerting was the strange feeling below my knees.

Because the bottom bracket is so narrow there was a sensation of my legs bending inwards and my left heel kept banging against the chainstay. Obviously, from the scraped paint my performance in that area was equal to Graeme's.

It was a privilege to have been astride Graeme's bike; to have forced my feet into his shoes; to have experienced the newest and fastest position. The crowd appear to have been impressed - by the machine, of course - and in the museum a lot of folk showed considerable interest in the bike.

## Club Kit Order

Pactimo kit orders may be collected from Tierney Strachan, 12 Greenbank Place, East Tullos, Aberdeen, AB12 3BT. We are not receiving persons at our reception.

Please ring the bell at our Goods-In door and announce that you are here to collect Deeside Kit with your name. Wait outside the door and your kit will be brought to you.

If the small roller shutter door is closed - please telephone the office number, 01224 295000. If the main gates are closed, we are closed.

Our policy is that non-essential personnel may NOT enter the building - so we have no facility for you to try on. If you are in any doubt about the sizes you have ordered, let me know and possibly we can do a swap or refund.

I can post out to those that want it. Let me know and I can arrange. You can easily buy postage online and send it to me; I'd need to give you weights and dimensions if you want to do this.

Any queries contact [clubkit@deeside.org](mailto:clubkit@deeside.org) **Jon Strachan**



### Britain's National Cyclists' Association

Working for all Cyclists

Newcomers are welcome particularly on the Morning/Slower Full Day runs.

Medium and Faster Full Day runs are for the more experienced

For more information visit our website:

<http://www.ctcgrampian.org.uk>

Chairman	John B	01224 571984
Secretary	Sheila	01224 639012
Runs Co-ordinator	John S	01224 790269
Social Secretary	Heather	01224 699399
Treasurer	John C	
Membership	John T	01224 639012

### Right to Ride Representatives

South Aberdeenshire	Vacant	
Central Aberdeenshire	Vacant	
North Aberdeenshire	Rod	01467 623317
Aberdeen City	Jean	01224 315222

### Runs Co-ordinators

Try Cycling Rides	Moir D	
Morning Runs	Cindy	01224 310719
Slower Full Day Runs	Heather	01224 699399
Medium Full Day Runs	Sheila	01224 63901
Faster Full Day Runs	John S	01224 790269

## Histerical Reminiscences

### (Part 31)

After checking on the groups undertaking a Duke of Edinburgh's Award Expedition, I'd an hour to spare. Heading off the south slopes of Little Elrick just north of Invercauld it took me into Glean an t-Slugain, a narrow glen which deepens as it heads north-west towards Beinn a'Bhuird. Known as the Fairy Glen it is especially beautiful towards the top where rowans cling to the sides and come September heather blooms purple.

Having done this route often, always staying in the valley, I decided to vary my options. A track branches off somewhere towards the middle of the glen. It travels parallel to the main way, rising steadily until above the lodge at the head of the valley. Knowing the lower track well, I'd studiously avoided the alternative route on the north side of the glen.

I could cycle in to the last steep ramp up which I'd struggle, pushing my bike to the apparent quarried area around the derelict shooting lodge. This ramp sometimes climbs beside the Slugain burn, at other times straddling the water, giant slabs of schist forming the bridge.

So, there was I discovering a new way, one which I'd rejected for fear of difficulties. Instead, it took me upwards gradually and, on my bike, to the top of the glen. As it levelled, I looked down on the broken walls of the lodge and vowed that future excursions to that area would be via this little used path. Then the hairs on my neck prickled.

Startled, I looked round at the banks of weathered and compacted schist. It was as if some demented builder had gone berserk on the mountainside. The shivers started on my damp back and I felt as if I'd been there before. A quick sortie into one of the gullies heightened the feeling of *de ja vu*.

That evening as the wind howled and blew sleet off the corries on Beinn a'Bhuird I rolled myself into the comforts of hollifill. In the racing thoughts moments before sleep crept over me, I recalled a *Scots Magazine* that had spoken of the Secret Howff. I drifted into the slumber that only someone, who has lain on jaggy heather inside a dripping, flapping tent, with the temperature near zero, can understand.

A week later I revisited the scene. Approaching the same point hairs again stood on end. Two Old English Sheepdogs bounded round the corner; hair tied in knots above their heads. They were followed by a lean, bronzed and kiltless John Smith. Did I intend bothying that night was John's query? "*Aye, it's not three minutes awa.*". Not needing a second bidding I went scurrying among the boulders, clambering over the heather, and squelching in the bog. The three minutes became thirty. I retraced, exploring each rickle of stones in the vain hope that I'd discover the hallowed refuge.

I'd left my bike farther down the hillside for this search had been one into a territory which could be regarded as

personal to hillwalkers and mountaineers and even I have a conscience that can be pricked.

Time marched on and I had to rendezvous with more expedition charges. The location of the Secret Howff was about to remain a mystery.

Suddenly, as steps were retraced, I spotted a narrow path heading up through the rocks. Deciding to check this final route I clambered higher and there before me on a shelf of green grass stood the shelter.

It is sturdy, so well built it has withstood many years of mountain storms. A group called the Kincorth Boys had laboured steadily in 1954, using the native stone and mud to create sound walls, corrugated iron and wood had been toted in to fabricate a roof, flooring and door. Inside it is comfortable, candles sit waiting to be lit, a stapled book of howff ballads to be sung, a bench seat for two or three residents and space on the floor for four or five or six to doss.

Jealous that I'd not been part of the original crew a feeling of wicked pleasure overtook my envy. Few people know of the howff's location let alone where to find it.

On our descent to Johannesburg airport, the pilot welcomed us to South Africa, and he hoped we'd had a safe flight. Then he added, "*You'll certainly have felt safer than you will on the streets of Jo'burg.*"

Fortunately, we were only changing flights and heading north again, to Lilongwe in Malawi. While waiting we watched the bike bags emerge from the hold and get dumped on the tarmac. A baggage handler zipped around with his truck and on one pass he drove over the corner of my bike bag! Weeks later the frame snapped just under the seat cluster!

The bikes didn't make it to our Lilongwe flight, instead, being transferred to Blantyre along with our rucksacks. It was several days before being reunited with our belongings.

Unaccustomed to the heat, with nothing more than the shorts and t-shirts we were clothed in, soon, everything stank.

Vipha Forest is vast. It is said to be the largest man-made forest in Africa covering much of the plateau in central and northern Malawi.

Our route north took us along the miles of trail. Overtaking a local, his dog gave chase. We could hear the owner bellowing for ages and our efforts to make the dog return came to no avail.

Eventually it tailed off as we put on a bit of pressure.

In due course we met up with a bike riding pastor. Stopping to chat he told us he had been a man of the cloth for many years. He also had a great many children.

Laughing, he told us that he only worked Sundays. He was too busy the rest of the week.

From Newburgh we headed north to the Forvie Sands. All morning, skeins of geese, some hundreds strong, headed inland from Forvie. No doubt farmers everywhere were counting the cost as the migrants from Greenland and Canada settled to another day of stripping winter fodder from the fields.

This route is well managed and where the path crosses boggy areas a wooden walk-way had been laid. Wooden steps led up and down the most difficult places. This was an easy day out.

Reaching Collieston we continued northwards. Another path took us close to the cliff edge. Below, waves crashed on the rocks. Skuas skimmed over the sea and the occasional guillemot dive bombed fish. The path narrowed and became more difficult.

Cliff dwelling sheep scattered in front and in less than two miles Slains Castle came into view.

It wasn't what we'd expected. Only one wall remained standing and two rusty cannon lay close by.

Neither of us had been there before and our minimal knowledge didn't let us accept this as Slains Castle.

Indeed, we were right and wrong. The remains had been erected as long ago as the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It was sacked and burned in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The Earl, whose family seat it was, built a new castle in 1597, near Port Erroll, six miles further north. They are both known as Slains Castle.

The new building was added to over the years with the last major work completed in 1837. Less than a 100 years later it had fallen into disrepair. Left to the elements it now stands gaunt and eerie on the clifftops. It can be accessed from Cruden Bay.

Legend has it that *Bram Stoker*, author of *Dracula*, frequently passed its portals. Inspired by the jagged sea rocks, high cliffs and folklore tales of ghosts and evil spirits, he had put pen to paper.

Glances out of empty windows showed awesome drops to the churning sea a hundred feet below. A black-coated visitor led his wife in front of us. It was easy to imagine him with hair sleeked back and fangs for teeth.

Close by the desolate ruin, stands a simple memorial.

Inscribed on the small stone, standing near the cliff edge, are a few words. It is a plea from the parents of a small boy who had slipped and died on the cliffs, that visitors should

take care to prevent further tragedies happening at that spot.

October is called suicide month. Leaving Bulawayo before 8.00am no account was taken of the sun's heat. It shone brilliantly and looked settled for the day. An hour passed and our average speed dropped alarmingly.

At a snail's pace we cycled only a few kilometres at a time before sheltering from the blaze. The temperature soared beyond 40°C in the shade and the 6 litres of water being carried did not last long. Soon Coke had replaced the water and quickly we overdosed on sugar.

Zimbabwe main roads are wide, smooth and straight. Traffic is light, which permits the few vehicles to travel at excessive speed. Parallel with these main roads are old strip roads; two narrow bands of tar a wheel track apart. In addition, there are 100s of kilometres of dirt/dust/gravel roads.

The country is flat, the horizon just up the road three kilometres or so, except in the east where there are the Eastern Highlands and, in the west, where an escarpment borders the Zambezi and Lake Kariba.

As an indication how flat, the Victoria Falls to Bulawayo railway does not deviate in all of 125kms, the third longest straight stretch of line in the world.

Acacia trees line the roadside giving us umbrellas to shade the sun.

A National Park was cycled into through herds of wildebeest and zebra and past giraffe at a water hole.

Drums beat in an African kraal where a memorial service was being held. The women walk 10 kilometres to collect water and by the time they return half the water has already been drunk.

For a few years New Year's morning on Bennachie saw a gathering of cyclists who'd scale the heights in celebration. Club records were set and one such visit saw youngster, Bill Rawles, strut his stuff, stating his intention to upgrade my performance.

Looking askance at his new-fangled mountain bike, which I'd sarcastically dubbed an adult BMX, I doubted his sanity and ability.

Come his start time he'd disappeared but soon re-emerged with a uni-cycle on which he set off to establish a best for that type of machine.

His mountain bike lay at the side of the track and I couldn't resist the impulse. Soon, I was pedalling with ease over the boulders and heather in pursuit of Bill, now reduced to shouldering his single-wheel machine.

I was hooked.

***Roughstuffer***





## For Sale

Items will appear here for three consecutive issues. If the item sells before the final appearance, please contact [knockies@aol.com](mailto:knockies@aol.com) so that the details can be removed.

- 1 Cervelo R3 - New bike build - 56cm - new components (excl. wheels & cassette are used). Delightfully light and nimble machine. £2,200 without, £2,450 with wheels & cassette. Contact Jon Strachan on [jas@tierney-strachan.co.uk](mailto:jas@tierney-strachan.co.uk) (1)
- 2 16-inch Islabike, red. Excellent condition. Suitable for age 4+. Widely accepted as one of the best quality brands. Ideal for the young cyclist who has mastered the balance bike and wants to pedal! 50% of the sale price will be donated to charity. Cost £350. Sale price: £200:00. Contact Malcolm Wilson, [malcywilson@me.com](mailto:malcywilson@me.com) 07970 227548 (1)
- 4 Whyte T-129 RS - 2017 awesome trail bike. Mint condition. Fork: FOX 34 Float Performance 29 110x15, Rear shock: FOX Float DPS Performance, Brakes: Shimano XT M8000, Drivetrain: Shimano XT M8000, Seatpost: RockShox Reverb Stealth (170 mm), Stem: Whyte Gravity Stem 40 mm, Handlebar: Whyte Custom 760 mm x 15 mm rise, Wheels: RaceFace ARC-27 with Hope PRO4 Rear Hub, Weight: 13.8 kg. Pictures and details on request. £1250. Contact Glenn Brown on [glennrbrwn@gmail.com](mailto:glennrbrwn@gmail.com) (1)
- 4 2018 Canyon Ultimate CF SLX size M. Colour grey. Ultegra groupset with Mavic Ksyrium and Dura Ace C50 carbon tubs. Excellent condition with recent service. Only ever had summer use, Dura Ace wheels & tyres are as new. Price £2,500. Contact Karl on [karldaly78@yahoo.com](mailto:karldaly78@yahoo.com)
- 5 I have a couple of kids bikes for sale:  
Islabikes Beinn 20 - Red  
Islabikes Beinn 24 - Blue  
Both in good mechanical condition with some minor scuffs/scratches on the frames. The Beinn 24 has offroad tyres fitted but will come with a set of road tyres also. Contact Euan on [e\\_cartlidge@hotmail.com](mailto:e_cartlidge@hotmail.com)
- 6 ELLIPTICAL TRAINER - £80. Model: Pro-form 605 ZLE. Bought (£500) new in October '16. In excellent condition. Phone: 013398 86557 or email [janiceborland@icloud.com](mailto:janiceborland@icloud.com) or

## Wanted

- 1 A couple of pairs of a V brake callipers that are laid round doing nothing. Just trying to get a friend's bike back on the road. Please contact me on [richard4750@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:richard4750@hotmail.co.uk) (2)

## Free

- 1 I have several well used bikes that I wish to dispose. Free to anyone who collects them from our house in Aboyne. Bikes include Specialized Roubaix road bike, and a quality youth road bike with little mileage, youth mountain bike plus others. ontact John Bergeland on [johnbergeland@yahoo.com](mailto:johnbergeland@yahoo.com)

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<http://deeside.org/join>

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keep it at bay

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#### Membership Application

Name: .....

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Please complete and return to Sandy Lindsay,  
Rowan Cottage, Inveramsay, Inverurie, AB51 5DQ  
Telephone 01467 681330 or email:

[knockies@aol.com](mailto:knockies@aol.com)

The Deeside Thistle Cycling Club publishes this magazine. The Editor is Sandy Lindsay MBE, Rowan Cottage, Inveramsay, Inverurie, AB51 5DQ. Tel: 01467 681330 / 07867 857221 – Email: [knockies@aol.com](mailto:knockies@aol.com)

# DEESIDE THISTLE CYCLING CLUB

Welcome to the Deeside Thistle Evening League for 2021

Registration takes place online. Go [here](#)

Once the registration page has been visited follow each button in order, for additional information

**Please note: The League will not start until Coronavirus restrictions permit**

ALL ENTRANTS MUST ADHERE TO THE RULES			Event	Time
Apr 27	<u>10 TT</u>	<u>Drumoak</u>	1	: :
<u>May, 04</u>	12 CTT	<u>Echt / Dunecht / Midmar</u>	2	: :
<u>May, 11</u>	10 TT	<u>Drumoak</u>	3	: :
<u>May, 18</u>	18 CTT	<u>Echt / Millbank / Learney</u>	4	: :
May, 25	10 TT	<u>Pitmedden</u>	5	: :
June, 01	25 TT	<u>Echt / Cairnie / Millbank / Learney</u>	6	: :
<u>June, 08</u>	20 CTT	<u>Netherley / Durris / Slug</u>	7	: :
<u>June, 15</u>	9.5 CTT	<u>Fintray</u>	8	
<u>June, 22</u>	10 TT	<u>Drumoak</u>	9	: :
June, 29	25 CTT	<u>Echt / Cairnie / Millbank / Learney</u>	10	: :
July, 06	TRADES HOLIDAY, NO RACE			
<u>July, 13</u>	01 HC	Cairn Mon Earn	11	: :
<u>July, 20</u>	12 CTT	<u>Echt / Dunecht / Midmar / Echt</u>	12	: :
July, 27	10 TT	<u>Drumoak</u>	13	: :
<u>Aug, 03</u>	08 CTT	<u>Garlogie / Echt / Garlogie</u>	14	

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