

Issue 597

December 2023

Cranks
Golden Jubilee
Volume 50
The magazine of
Deeside Thistle Cycling Club
Sponsored by:

MPH
Mechanical Plant Hire

Tierney Strachan
PROCESS CONTROL ENGINEERING

Current Membership 558 (583)
SCU Membership 296 (299)
Scottish Cycling's Largest Club



Racing Update

Round 6 of the Scottish CX series took place on the grounds of the no longer in use golf course at Camperdown Park just outside Dundee on 03 December.

With Keith Stocker (Scottish Cycling's CX Coaching guru) the main organiser, racers knew they'd be in for a treat with courses designed to promote close racing. What he probably didn't bargain for was the flurry of snow on Saturday and -6°C temperatures at 8am when riders were arriving.

Course practice was crucial for riders to figure out line choices throughout the multiple spiral turns, transitions from frost packed grass onto tarmac, along with trying to stay upright on camber banks that were decisive in the outcome of the close races within each race. 3 of the golf course bunkers were incorporated into the course, it was however one of those days where golf balls would have simply bounced out, much like those riding their bikes through them found out.

With Ollie Carter, Ross Easthaugh, Ava Luce and Zara Main first off in the U14/16 race, they once again showed the other Scottish clubs what it takes to proudly race in a DTCC jersey, by being very visible at the front of their respective races.

Ollie (U16 Boy) who was locked in a race long battle with another rider made his race winning move with half a lap to go, he capped off his first CX race win in style by controlling his effort to the finish. Ross (U16 Boy) also find himself locked in a close battle with 4 other riders for 3rd place narrowly missing out in the end.

Ava (U16 Girl) and Zara (U14 Girl), had similar close racing battles within their own races, not to be outdone by the boys Ava crossed the line in 3rd and Zara 1st in their respective races.

Harriet Hendry (Jnr Female) had some fierce competition in the combined female race. She comfortably took victory in the Jnr race and finished a very respectable 4th with all categories combined.

The next Deesiders up in action were the U12's. Fresh from their cold weather session in -8°C at Knockburn the

Editorial

In all my lifetime of association with the Deeside Thistle one of the main targets for many members was the pursuit of the time-trial trophies. These range from our Novice 10 through to our Best-All-Rounder Awards.

We can blame the Covid-19 pandemic for tolling the death-knell over much of our competition, but it is a fact that support for time-trialling had been in decline for many years. Did the decline stem from availability of suitable courses, the imposition of additional strictures on organisers, lack of interest from riders? Who knows?

What I do know is that Mark Walker has worked hard to re-invigorate that interest from riders. He has also tried to re-instate some of the races. His efforts, along with other available events elsewhere in Scotland, means that we're able to make some of the awards this year.

Jim Robb, who has been competing since a teenager in the 1970s, secured both the Senior BAR and Vets BAR with performances at 25, 50 and 100 miles.

Margaret McMillan, with performances over 10, 25 and 50 miles won the Female counterparts.

Andrew Yule won the 25TT Trophy which goes to the member with best combined performances over two 25 mile events.

Are these three riders heralding a new beginning. Here's to next season.

PHILOSOPHER'S CORNER

The future depends on what you do today - Mahatma Gandhi

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@deeside.org



Jingle bells, jingle bells, Jingle all the way. Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh

previous day, the temperatures in Dundee seemed a breeze for Emma Mcnamarra (U12 Girl), Josh Sharp (U12 Boy) and Calum Campbell (U12 Boy). Raced on a separate course, the slippery corners presented the biggest challenge, especially on what was a very fast course. All 3 DTCC riders battled hard for the whole race, despite the challenging conditions they never gave up and managed to hold on to see the chequered flag being waved.

Full results can be seen here - <https://results.sporthive.com/events/PC2486251>

The 7th and final round of the Scottish CX series was held at the Brechin Equestrian Centre on Sunday 10 December. This event was rescheduled after the venue was affected by the floods in the area throughout October. The mud along with fast slippery descents meant it was one of the riders favourite courses of the season. Good technical skills along with strong legs was required in order to take on what the course threw at the riders.

DTCC were well represented across all categories.

U8's - Lucy Macnamara, Lucy Porter, Harrison Bremner
U12's - Emma Macnamara, Calum Campbell, Freddy Ball, Josh Sharp

U16's - Emma Campbell, Melanie Rowe, Innes Long, Ross Eastough, Thomas MacCrae

U14's - Zara Main

Women - Harriet Hendry (Jnr)

Vet 50/60 - Joseph Fee, Graham Gauld

Vet 40 - Chris Main, Dave Ogden, Sam Long

Senior Open - Neil Scott

Special Mention to Melanie (U16G), Zara (U14G) and Dave (Vet 40) for taking the win in their categories and bagging the sought after bag of daffodils given to each race winner.

Also big shout out to Neil (2nd Senior Open), Harriet (2nd Jnr Women), Lucy P (2nd U8 G), Lucy M (3rd U8G) and Harrison (3rd U8B)

Well done to all our riders who have raced and supported the Scottish CX Series events this year, it's been great to see so many Deesiders young and old getting involved. A full list of the seasons results can be found here: <https://sporthive.com/events/2490853>

Meanwhile a lot of miles further South at the Cyclopark in Gravesend, Olivia Poole was the sole Deeside rider at the 5th round of the CX National Trophy. Olivia faced similar conditions to her team-mates up the road in Brechin. In typically dominant Olivia fashion she battled to a great win ensuring she kept hold of her series leader jersey.
Chris Main



Elliot Rowe

Many congratulations to Elliot and "the family" for his stupendous achievement in winning the Under 23 Ghent 6. A great inspiration for the younger riders and their coaches and helpers. Well done everyone! A great achievement.

Alan Campbell

Windfarm on Hill of Fare

I went to one of the consultations regarding the proposed Wind Farm on Hill o Fare (between Banchory, Midmar, Torphins and Echt).

It became apparent during the discussion that if the plans are agreed I would say it will almost certainly lead to big disruption to KoS chainer due to road closures and heavy plant manoeuvres over the 3 years it will take to build the site and lay the infrastructure.

Midmar Races and DTCC Evening League series will also be affected.
Calum Cormack

Deeside Thistle CC

AGM & Social

**Our Annual General Meeting
takes place on Friday**

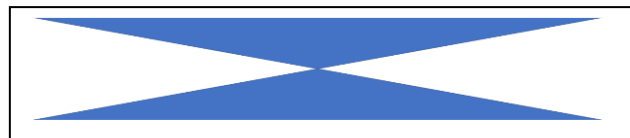
12 January 2023

Venue is Echt Hall

**Doors open from 6.30pm with the
meeting starting at 7.00pm**

**After the AGM business is
complete, refreshments will be
provided**

**To give us some idea how many
to cater for, please indicate if you
will be in attendance. Reply to
info@deeside.org**



Jingle bells, jingle bells, Jingle all the way. Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh

Alan Campbell

Our President, Alan Campbell, has recently undergone a major operation.

He really appreciates all the support from Deeside Thistle members, other clubs and enthusiasts and it is likely recovery will take months. He won't be able to speak individually to all his cycling friends as often as he'd like.

We wish him all the best for a successful recovery.

Scottish Cyclocross Championships

I think it was a great show case event that really showed Knockburn and Deeside Thistle in a tremendous light! The course (congrats to Neil) really did make the most of the variety of Knockburn's features and landscape, although some folk would like to see the ski-run left out next time!!!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you and the team for the support, the ease of operating, and pragmatic support before and on the day! The truck was a great help for use to be efficient, and the way John and Jason worked with us was also just so easy – nothing was too hard!

As for next year – I guess time will tell, but I am sure the club is keen to have an offering from Scottish Cycling – we will see how that plays out!

Doug Easthaugh

SCNEG AGM

The Annual General Meeting of our Grampian Region will be on Thursday 18 January 2024 from 7.00pm in Adventure Aberdeen. Colin Allanach intends to step down as Chairman so a replacement is sought.

Annual Affiliation to Scottish Cycling

We are delighted to let you know that the affiliation for Deeside Thistle CC has been approved for 2024.

Scottish Cycling appreciates Deeside Thistle CC support through affiliation. Your support will ensure that we can continue to meet the needs of members, clubs and the community in the year to come.

On behalf of the Scottish Cycling Team, I would like to thank you for your affiliation and hope that you and your members enjoy a safe and successful year.

Commissaire Opportunity

Ready to start the journey to become a commissaire? Events don't run without them. Want to be part of the wider biking community.

Find out more about becoming a commissaire and the training you undergo here. [Trainee Commissaire course \(britishcycling.org.uk\)](https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/traineecommissairecourse).

If anyone's interested, please contact volunteer@scottishcycling.org.uk

New Kit Bag

The version 2.0 bag incorporates improvements fed back from youth riders and new products that the Montrose Bag Company offer.

The last kit bag made for the club was in 2015, with a good number of these still being used to date. It gives an example of the robustness of the bags made by this Company.

The new bag is based on the original design but with some improvements. The original bag size of 66cm x 30cm x 30cm remains, there are 2 end pockets that are 10cm wide and a central pocket of 46cm wide giving the following capacity of 9L + 41.5L +9L. Please see pictures [here](#)

The new bag will be in the same waterproof material however in a turquoise green colour with white Logo patches. There will be a netted pocket inside the lid of the central compartment, and it will have a double rucksack strap. It will have a side pocket and a clear card holder.

Each bag can have an individual rider's name printed beneath the club's wings logo on the end panel. The full club logo would be on the side panel opposite the pocket. This bag will cost £88 per bag based on an order quantity of 20-50 pieces and the current lead time is 6 weeks from the point of order. I appreciate that this is not an insignificant amount to spend on a bag. However, from my experience with the bags from the Montrose Bag Company they are very hard wearing and should last a long time. If you are interested in getting a bag please comment [here](#)

Russell Macnamara

Total Endurance

Our dates of Winter Talks and Workshops are all available for booking. The first talk focuses on winter training and aims to give practical advice on how you can optimise your winter training to make improvements needed for your event(s). The talks have a maximum capacity of 20 people and are free to attend. The workshops have a maximum capacity of 5 for the bike maintenance classes and 6 for the run/swim workshops You can book your space for any of the talks at this [link](#).



Jingle bells, jingle bells, Jingle all the way. Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh

KNOCKBURN LOCH MANAGEMENT

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

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>

New Members

The following new or returning members have joined in recent weeks.

3134	Charlie Darroch	12	Banchory
3135	Aiden Lean	14	Blackburn
3136	Owen Lean	10	Blackburn
3137	Ewan Curtis	12	Banchory

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 or to email members@deeside.org asking for information.

Zwift Sunday Club Endurance Ride

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.



ZWIFT.COM

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.



Spond Guide Update - Group Codes

If you are already registered in Spond and in one DTCC group, you can join another with these links (or use the "Enter Code" option in the App).

DonsideBunch	https://group.spond.com/WWDYZ
Banchory	https://group.spond.com/TYLWP
DTCC MTB	https://group.spond.com/MRFCH
LeggartTerrace	https://group.spond.com/AGTNP

Click on the group(s) you want to be member of, and the ride admin will accept you.

Link to PDF Spond guide: http://deeside.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/DTCC_Spond_and_Ride_Leader_Guide.pdf

Link to PPT Spond guide: http://deeside.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/DTCC_Spond_and_Ride_Leader_Guide.pptx

Peter Smart

Donside Bunch Rides

Mostly starting from Kintore, these will vary in length (and sometimes start time). Make up of groups will depend on who attends on a week-by-week basis.

For those who are venturing outside for the first time or returning after a break/injury etc, there will be a shorter/steadier (sub 3hr) ride posted every Sunday. Can't guarantee a leader for that ride but will attempt to get a volunteer on a weekly basis.

All rides will be posted on [SPOND](#). The more people that sign up for the steadier ride, the more chance of it being a success.

Donside Bunch - Winter 2023/24

Winter base rides started on Sunday 5th November from Kintore Primary School at 0900hrs. Pre Xmas we will keep the rides to max 3hrs and will start to build distance in the New Year.

As much as is practicable, these will be group rides. It would be great if we could get numbers for a steady and faster group.

Coffee stops will be planned if the weather conditions allow. Flashing lights front and back are encouraged (why wouldn't you!). Mudguards are preferred. Get yourself ready for a successful 2024!
Andy Kerr

Wednesday / Friday Banchory Rides

Town Hall at 1000. Check on [SPOND](#) if you are able to. Rides on Friday are to Ballater. Best to book table at Brown Sugar via FB Messenger. Rides on Wednesday are to 'somewhere else', usually about 80km/50mi.



Jingle bells, jingle bells, Jingle all the way. Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh

Sunday Banchory Rides

The rides will start 10:00 am (sharp) from Banchory Townhall (carpark opposite town hall). The rides will be published on SPOND, and we would ask you to sign up for the ride via SPOND, so we know who is riding and we have your emergency contact details.

You can download [SPOND](#) on your smart phone or access any computer or tablet via: <https://spond.com/welcome>.

To join the Banchory Rides group please sign up via: <https://group.spond.com/TYLWP>

There are other rides through the week and sometimes adhoc meetup, so it is worth joining. The route will be published on SPOND and will always include a coffee stop. Distance is around 50 miles.

We will try and run two groups. Espresso and Latte. Espresso will be a ride aiming for 18 to 20 mph average. Latte will be no drop ride riding at the pace of the slowest rider, but hopefully around 16 mph, or slower if needed. Espresso will set off first, anyone dropped from Espresso can drop back to Latte. If we do not have enough for two groups, it will be a no drop ride. All levels of rider welcome

Saturday Morning Group Rides - Leggart Tce

Over autumn and into winter, the Saturday morning group rides from Leggart Terrace will start at the later time of 09:00. Alan Campbell will take a steady group on the ride while Steve Brechin will lead a slightly brisker group if numbers allow.

The 54mile/87km route, known within the club as The Chairman's Classic, takes in some of the best climbs in the local area. You can view the route here: [The Chairman's Classic | 86.7 km Cycling Route on Strava](#).

It's a no drop ride and all are welcome. Email Steve Brechin on DTCC-Banchory.Saturday@outlook.com or look for us on [Spond](#).

Please consider the use of mud guards on your bike until we get into the better weather again.

Coaching Courses

Those members keen to get involved with coaching can find details of upcoming courses and funding opportunities on the SC web site. Go here:

<https://www.britishcycling.org.uk/scotland/coaching>

Club Mountain Bike Rides

There's long been a need to hold regular mountain bike rides for club members, but the question was how to achieve this. As with everything there will be a wide range of abilities, bikes, fitness, and locality within the club so one ride group won't satisfy everyone, every week.

With all that in mind can you comment if you are interested with the following:

- a) What level/type of rider are you?
- b) What kind of rides would you like to see the club put on?
- c) Where are you located and where do you predominately ride?
- d) Do you have any qualifications?
- e) Would you be interested in leading a ride?

You can register here <https://group.spond.com/WWDYZ> and comments, please, to Neil on mtb@deeside.org

Club Kit Arrival

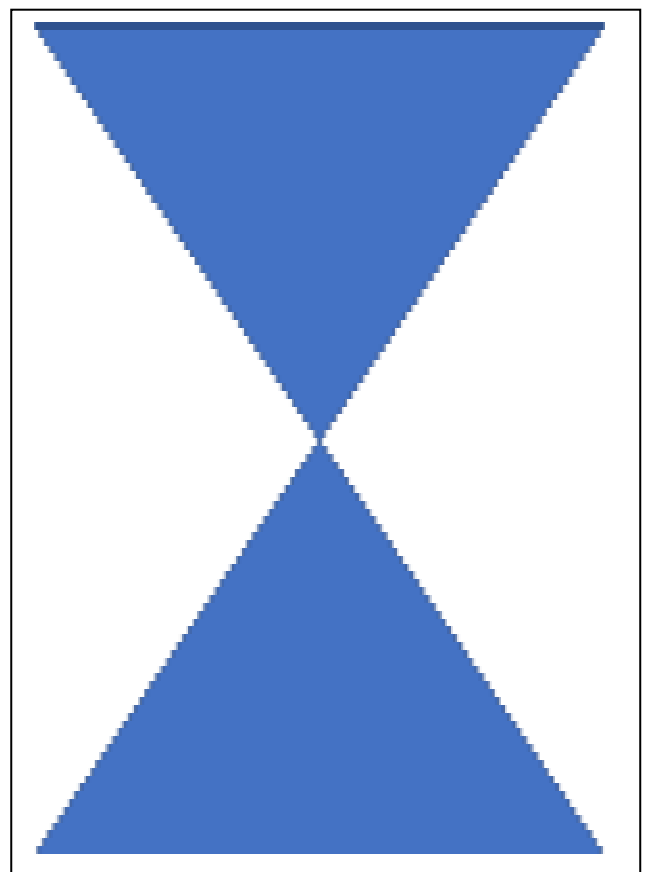
Pactimo kit order is now available to collect from Tierney Strachan, 12 Greenbank Place, East Tullis, AB12 3BT. Normal office hours apply.

Please ring the bell at our Goods-In door, and announce that you are here to collect Deeside Kit with your name. If the small roller shutter door is closed - please ring the office number 01224 295000. If the main gates are closed, we are closed, simples.

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 need to give you weights and dimensions if you want to do this.

Best Regards, Jon Strachan
jas@tierney-strachan.co.uk





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 Representative

North Aberdeenshire	Rod	01467 623317
---------------------	-----	--------------

Runs Co-ordinators

Try Cycling Rides	Moira 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

Following guidance from our Covid 19 Officer, Rod Adams, the following has been agreed to ensure that our runs will operate in a Covid secure fashion.

Our risk assessment has been uploaded to the CTC Grampian website: <http://www.ctcgrampian.org.uk/> and participation in club rides will be subject to all participants having familiarised themselves with, and agreed to comply with, the terms of the risk assessment.

To be Track and Trace compliant, we are asking all participants to arrive with a small (business card size) paper with their name and contact details. These papers will be collected by the Ride Leader at the start of the run in a plastic bag and held securely for 21 days, before being destroyed. This requirement will be incorporated into the risk assessment and displayed on the Runs list page of the club website. **“No ticket, no ride”!**

In addition, all riders continue to be required to carry a Next of Kin card in the event of an accident. These are available from the Ride Leader and/or Secretary.

Newcomers: We welcome newcomers, particularly on the ‘Try Cycling’ and ‘Morning’ runs. You do not need to be a member of the Cycling UK to join our runs, but after 3 runs you would be expected to join Cycling UK.

Runs start promptly at the time stated. Distances are calculated from the meeting place. Bring spare inner tube, puncture repair kit, tools, wet weather gear, some food,

drink, and LIGHTS where relevant. It is recommended that all cyclists carry a First Aid kit.

Try Cycling: rides are intended for those who have not been on the saddle for a while and for those who want a quiet ride around Aberdeen. These are easy rides followed or interrupted by a coffee stop, families are welcome.

Morning Runs: These runs are at a relatively slow pace and are usually about 25–30 miles long. A coffee or picnic stop will usually be made.

Full Day Runs: These are all-day runs intended for experienced cyclists. A coffee stop and lunch/picnic stop will be made. Distances and speeds vary as outlined below:

Slower Full Day Runs: Slowish pace. Distance normally 30-45 miles.

Medium Full Day Runs: Moderate pace. Distance normally 45-60 mls.

Faster Full Day Runs: Fast pace. Distance normally 60-75 miles (* runs are longer).

Pub Runs: Start prompt at the time stated, to reach the pub by 21:00. LIGHTS

Runs

The full calendar of runs is available here: <https://ctcgrampian.org.uk/runs-list/>

25 Years Ago

VISIT BY DAVID MILLAR

David Millar, the Cofidis professional and the world’s top 21 year old, visited the Deeside at the start of November. Born in Malta to Scottish parents David lived some of his school years in Forres. His father’s job took them to Hong Kong, now his official address. Bitten by the BMX bug he progressed to MTBs, then road cycling. Setting targets he progressed very quickly through the Junior ranks and moved to the continent as a first year senior. The following year, against peer advice, he turned professional and soon established himself.

He turned out to be shy, not at all like his notes portray in Cycle Sport. This shyness belied his strong views on a number of cycling issues that came out during a question and answer session at Westhill Academy.

Hosted by Sandy Lindsay, 40 plus members and friends filled the comfortable staffroom. David’s replies during the two-hour chat show were laced with humour but were also factual. Out of the conversation came many bits of advice for those present. He didn’t hedge answers and even when presented with difficult questions such as opinions on officialdom in sport he was downright forthright.

On the Saturday he followed a small group of cyclists who trained hard over a short circuit. Unfortunately, the weather was bad and a number of those who could have attended didn’t. The weather also prevented extending the run.



For Sale

- 1 a) The bikes are Project One custom built Trek Emonda SLR6 eTap and we have 10 available. Sizes range from 47 to 56
- b) We are selling some of our training wheels, 8 sets available. Very lightly used, Bontrager Paradigm Comp 25 Disc (160mm rotor included), RRP £350 – selling for £150 per set
Further info contact Bob on bob@alba-rt.com
- 2 a) Airborne - Carpe Diem in red (aluminium frame) 19" centre to top tube. Set up as a winter bike (although it can make a great cyclo-cross bike) New Sora 9 speed with Ritchey WCS cranks. Shimano Dura Ace wheelset and new Selcof stem and Planet X bars. SKS mudguards. Great condition. £400 secures
- b) Planet X Stealth frame set (blue) in large. Comes with seat pin, TT bars + risers and front mech £150 secures
- c) DT Swiss R20 wheelset. Used as backup wheels when I was going through my Everesting phase so, not much use. £150 secures.

Photos available and for further info. contact Phil Kelman - philipkelman@aol.com.

- 3 a) Indoor cycling fan, 8.5" dia with variable speed control. Mountable on your Garmin mount. £80 each. Three immediately available and a further 9 to be assembled on request

- b) Hand made plywood bike stand. £30 each. Three available immediately

Contact Andre Bergh on andre.k.bergh@gmail.com

- 4 a) I have moved to a smaller frame now (old age shrinkage) and I am selling a Boardman CX Team medium to suit 170-178cm. Good condition. SRAM Rival 11 speed, 44T front and 11-42 cassette. Hydraulic disc brakes, new 40 Schwalbe Smart Sam tyres. £375 ONO

- b) Second set of wheels if interested for winter rides. Gipiemme Roccia wheels fitted with 25mm road tyres. £150

- c) Also selling a new set of Pyro duathlon plates £70
Contact: Richard Burton: 07786081582

Annual Subscriptions

Our Club year runs from October to October so it is time to renew your membership - please go here: <http://deeside.org/join/>

- or do a Bank Transfer to TSB Sort Code 30 10 01, Account No 00802182
- you can telephone 07867 857221 when a card payment can be taken over the phone
- you may also pay your fees by cheque (made out to Deeside Thistle Cycling Club) and sent to Sandy Lindsay, Rowan Cottage, Inveramsay, Inverurie, AB51 5DQ

You may have children and spouse/partner listed as members so don't forget to include them when renewing - or if they are not already listed now's your chance to get them on the club register.

Fees are as follows:

Over 18	£23
16 – 18	£12
Under 16	£ 7
Spouse or partner of an existing member	£ 2
Each child (under 12) of existing member	£ 2
Associate member	£ 7

Historical Reminiscences

(Part 63)

Getting involved with the club in 1967 was a big step for me. I lived 20 odd miles from all the action. Cycling to and from was the only option with the journey adding to my training commitment. It served its purpose.

As time went in I spread my wings embracing all aspects of club life; racing, club runs, hostelling, admin. In fact, I was made Club Treasurer only months after joining and Club Secretary a year later. There was something satisfying about the all-consuming passion of riding a bike and helping run all aspects that surrounded club life.

One of the aspects that fascinated me right from the start was rough-stuffing. This satellite branch of our sport is simple – regardless of where you are going take your bike with you.

Living in the country as I did this facet was made for me. The hills around Stonehaven were soon all conquered and travelling further afield many more challenges were presented. The passes in the Cairngorms became a weekend haunt.

I don't know when I first became aware of the group specially formed to support those keen on the unmetalled tracks, but I do remember meeting George Berwick in Tongue YH around September 1968. He of the many 24-hour events also scorned the tarry stuff and he may have helped me follow the right path.

Formation of the Rough-Stuff Fellowship (RSF) started in 1954, long before the mountain bike evolved and though many followers of this interest just used their normal road-bikes others would modify things to cope with whatever extremes they went to.

Though I used tyres with as meaty a tread as I could find they weren't like the off-road tyres of today. To make them fit for purpose (who'd heard that term 50 years ago) I cut the beads off a pair of old tyres and squeezed them inside to use as puncture resistant strips. I'd also a triple chainset which gave me low enough gears to climb most gradients.

Riding a bike is hugely diverse. Even more so with today's craving, a pandemic almost, of folk wanting to ride sportives. There's time-trialling, epitomised by our own Evening League; road-racing with a good series available locally; track racing on wooden and asphalt tracks; mountain biking which is getting a good boost from NETCO.

Then there's exploring. This for me has developed out of the need to always have my bike with me wherever I go. It's an extension to expeditioning which necessarily takes up much more time.

I was out exploring with Alastair Brodie. We'd started out from Torphins and left the tarmac a bit south. The farm track had its interest with stampeding cattle leaping fences

but what gave us greatest pause for thought was after we'd touched the trig point on Stott Hill and headed downhill via Cairn Mude (an impressive cairn which doesn't seem to get many column inches) to Cairnmude croft.

The croft is derelict with two rusty irons leaning against an outhouse wall. Then in the barn a few steps away we came upon a strange sight. On the wall hung a giant painting of Mickey Mouse looking as if it had been done yesterday; across his forehead were the numbers 666.

Maps fascinate me. Especially so the old ones. It's interesting to pore over the printed sheet of early Ordnance Survey (OS) maps and see what has disappeared. Then go in search of the missing detail and still find traces on the ground.

OS maps first appeared early in the 19th century, and it took almost a hundred years for the whole of the country to be covered.

The mapping is based on 100km squares. Each square is titled with letters. For example, the square in which Aberdeen is mapped is called NJ. The bottom left-hand corner of this square is kilometre 0. It is then simple to understand that if you name a point NJ 92 06 you can locate this by moving along the bottom of the square to kilometre 92 and up the square to kilometre 06. This is the bottom left-hand corner of an area one kilometre square.

Using a rule, or a bit of guess-timattung you can divide the side of this one-kilometre square into 10 equal divisions – NJ 928 067. This will locate the bottom left-hand corner of a 100-metre square in Rosemount.

This is called the 6 figure National Grid Reference (NGR) and generally provides enough guidance for moving around.

Expanding further you can create an 8 figure Grid Reference which will take you to a 10 metre square. NJ 9289 0679 locates you at the east entrance to Victoria Park! Just think how accurate a 10 figure reference is.

Islay is a beautiful island just off the west coast. It is famous for its whiskies. [Laphroaig](#) is one of them. I became a [Friend](#) of Laphroaig many years ago. I can, when I'm minded, go to NR 38827 45645 and stand on my very own one-metre square of boggy island machair.

The hooter sounded as another aircraft approached. This time a large helicopter came and hovered over the upper, flat part of the landing strip. Settling down, before its doors were fully opened, twenty or more people rushed forward. They heaved their rucksacks into the opening space and clambered in after the bags. The luggage and folk inside had to fight their way through this struggling tide of trekkers desperate to get home.



Jingle bells, jingle bells, Jingle all the way. Oh, what fun it is to ride in a one-horse open sleigh

A couple of hours later a second helicopter arrived to the same experience. It turned out that a trekking party waiting at Kathmandu had dipped into their funds and chartered the two helicopters to fly them to Lukla.

This is a party on a trek to Base Camp, underwritten by a company called Survival Aids from the Lake District. What they have done brought to mind one of the comments repeatedly made by Chhatra, as we'd headed along the trail and burdened him with our worries. Would things be too tough for the bikes, would red tape stop us, or illness, the lack of energy, would there be major problems trying to get out, lack of time, no space on a plane for our bikes? Chhatra laughed and recommended, "*Charter helicopter.*"

Time kept going on and still no letter arrived. Deciding to stay another night we bemoaned the fact that another day is lost but the permission had to be obtained if at all possible. Tomorrow morning, immediately after the first flight, letter or no, we'd leave and try to reach Namche Bazar in one go, Surely, but surely, the Ambassador has had enough time to negotiate some sort of reply and get it sent to us. We have indicated the urgency and importance and hope that he will have helped.

Four folk from the Newcastle area have booked in. They have also trekked in from Jiri and have heard about us on the trail. They intend to leave early in the morning and reach Namche tomorrow.

In the afternoon our two friendly Americans also arrive. They will continue north towards Namche and camp somewhere around Phakding. Their target is Gokyo. It is unlikely we'll meet again but they have taken our addresses and intend to contact us when they return to the States.

A light dusting of snow covered everything as we emerged with daylight. Stepping out into the cold morning air from the warmth of Sukeyasu Guest House I looked up at the mountains and saw the tops, black rocks yesterday, now tinged with pink as the rising sun crept upwards. On the nearer slopes the sun would also soon hit grey shadow and in no time all the snow will melt.

Near the control tower a stand-pipe provides water for the east side of town.

Already busy with the local people I added to the confusion by taking my bundle of dirty clothes to wash. For the first time since the Soaltee Oberoi in Kathmandu I cleaned my teeth. Alastair and I have both been very careful about letting untreated water pass our lips and some book or other has told us not to clean our teeth for fear of contamination. Day by day I've become less cautious and this morning my mouth felt so mucky that I had to brush it out.

While at the stand-pipe I could hear noises coming from the control tower suggesting that contact had already been made with Kathmandu.

The low cloud of yesterday evening had worried, and I thought that today's scheduled flights might not be possible. However, regardless of whether or not, a letter arrives today our departure must be made this morning, as soon as possible after the first plane arrives. There is no time to delay any longer.

The lodge we have stayed in the last couple of nights has been very good, this, despite the rats that scabbled around inside the walls during the hours of darkness. It has a shower and its own toilet. The toilet is typically, dreadfully, unhygienic. These toilets are nothing more than a hole in the ground and stink awfully.

In stark contrast the dining room is reasonably clean, well set out, even with saltcellars on the tables. A large wood burning stove stands in the middle of the room.

The owner of the lodge has been interesting to talk to. Today he leaves to lead a trekking party into the mountains. This trek will not compare with the one he did in 1972 when he led an Italian expedition to Everest and stood on the summit.

Our adventure is not so ambitious. We only wish to stand at the foot of Everest with our bikes. Things are proving very difficult.

A plane arrived at 10.09. As soon as the hooter sounded we rushed across the runway to stand with the hundred or so others who all waited for their own reasons. Agitated, our patience was difficult to maintain.

Various officials moved up to the plane as it landed, to take deliveries from the crew and to check goods out of the hold. The chap from Mountain Travel went among them. He did receive some stuff and though we were in full view he made no move or gesture in our direction, instead disappearing back towards a lodge.

Stretched to breaking point but not wishing to interfere with protocol we continued to wait. Eventually he returned and coming up to us handed over an envelope. Hearts pounding, it was opened.

The letter from the Ambassador said that no-one from the concerned departments had been able or willing to give the go-ahead for us to take our bikes into the Sagarmatha area. That blow did not come as a surprise. To counter this the letter did not say that permissions had been refused. We were going in and left immediately. ***Roughstuffer***

