

The Seat Post

Mountain biking section newsletter

The butt stops here!

December 2011

At the Mtunzini Athletic Club AGM, held at the end of October, Shane Webster was voted in as cycling Captain with Frank Uzzell as vice. They have promised an exciting year for 2012, and plans for the Mtunzini Big 5 race are well underway, with invitations to you all to get involved.

Much fun and food was enjoyed by all at the annual Christmas lunch and prize-giving, held at Paul and Debbie Mannix's home. This year's prizes went to Kevin Hoffman for the 2nd year running for Cyclist of the Year and to Fred Mittermayer as Most Promising Cyclist of the Year. The gravity award had no deserving winner - clearly there has not been enough cycling during 2011!





As neither cyclist was at the lunch to collect their award, a picture of the running winners instead. No need to say what the spoon was for!

REGISTRATION:

Registration has opened for 2012. The membership fee for the Mtunzini Athletic Club remains the same at R200 per member, and once you have paid your subscription, you are eligible to get a Licence under this Club, on the cyclingsa.com website.

If you are doing all 5 Big 5 races in 2012 it is worthwhile getting the licence - R110 includes the Provincial fee.

NEWS FROM YOUR CYCLING CAPTAIN:

2012

As you all know I agreed to add the "Cycling Captain" to my growing cycling portfolio and with Frank as the vice captain and Debbie once again as the secretary I'm sure between us we can make the coming year an interesting one.

On the Big5 front the Mtunzini Athletics club has come to an agreement with the Round Table to run the Zini Estate classic as a Joint Venture with equal partnership. This is exciting news for the club and I'm hoping to use this as a platform to develop and attract more members to our cycling section.

Some good and bad news on the Big 5 is the resignation of the Heatonville Farmers Association, who decided that with a declining membership they no longer had the capacity to run the race. All is not lost as the good news is that, in an agreement with the Farmers Association, the Zululand Multi Sports Club will organize and manage the race and we'll still have our same Heatonville track. The debate at this point is the venue which may move to the Heatonville Adventure Park.

Looking forward to a great year ahead.

Shane

CYCLING EVENTS:

The Fish Eagle - November 2011 (Shane Webster)

The Zululand Multi Sports Club spent an enormous amount of time and effort building a permanent 25km track, half of which is single track, around the port and through the mangrove swamps along the canal and around the back of Silvacel. In very swampy areas they've built bridges and cut pathways which all makes for a very interesting and in some areas a fairly technical track.

This year they used the track for the Fish Eagle race, and with much optimism that the rain would stop, I set off to try it out. It was very disheartening to see how much effort they'd put in, only to have the rain drive most riders away with only 14 of us doing 2 laps for the 50km ride and not more than 40 riding the 25km.

The only other Zini rider daft enough to get out of bed was Dave Squires and together we set off in a light drizzle to begin with but this eventually turned into a fairly hard downpour.

With only 100m of climbing in the flat Richards Bay area you would think that this race would be all over in 2 hours, but think again, my time was 2.43, way more than our Zini track, with 750m of climbing. That's what happens in swampy technical single track in the pouring rain. The second circuit became a slippery mud bath. Despite the rain and mud, I saw some interesting parts of Richards Bay, and even managed a 1st position in my age group. There were only 3 of us, but a win is a win ok? (Most definitely - well done, Shane)

Well done to ZMSC for setting a permanent track, they're using it every weekend for their club rides so it will improve; if you get a chance try it out.

Berg & Bush - November 2011 (Kevin Hoffman)

Two day Berg & Bush is a must-do stage race.

In my opinion, it is better than Sani for the following reasons:

It takes place over a weekend instead of including week days

- Almost half the cost of Sani2C, albeit only two days of riding, yet the same number of nights' tented accommodation and meals
- Settled accommodation in one place, fully shaded alongside the Tugela River.
- Thornveld and rocky single tracks are a refreshing change from timber/sugarcane tracks
- Zip line and speed boat rides sure beats home-made bridges for crossing water stretches.

Like Sani, meals, atmosphere, course lay-out and organization are first class.

Angeline and I rode a perfect race - no mechanicals, falls or push-climbs and a good finishing position. Starting day 1 in batch D we worked our way up the field and by the time we crested Spionkop, we were riding amongst B batch teams.

Course from Spionkop down to the finish is the best downhill and river-edge single track you can imagine.

Day 2 saw us starting in A batch rubbing shoulders on the start line with Greg Minnaar (fellow Santa Cruz Tallboy) and his sister, Bridgette.

Very different from day 1, day 2 was a sprint from the start and the pace never let up with us

culminating in a full-on battle to the finish with the top ladies team.

We took them across the river-wade and this made Angeline the fastest lady of the day.

The thrill of the zip-line half way through the day was offset by the hot slog up Mike's pass nearer to the end. Mountain bikers really do prefer going with gravity rather than against it- especially in the summer heat of Northern Natal.

Our steady pace and good fortunes were rewarded with a top ten finish for the day and an eleventh overall for the 2 days.

Actually they were the first mixed team to finish the race - congratulations to you two.

And from the Frank Fred team!

Frank and Fred teamed up to do the Berg and Bush Descent - the 3 day event that was so enjoyed by Frank in 2010, albeit filled with drama and incident. The same went for 2011, but not with crashes but with Pasta from the Little Switzerland Restaurant. I have heard others say that pasta, mass cooked, before cycle races, is a no-no, and best to be avoided.

This resulted in the Fred Frank team being extremely dehydrated and depleted in electrolytes and suffering much from cramp. We say congratulations to Fred who seemed to recover after a very difficult first day to finish strongly on the third. And congratulations to Frank, who though he did not quite manage to finish the 3rd day, his bike did, as he lent it to a needy chap with a broken de railleur, and his beautiful 29er Specialized went on to aid a stranger home.

Thank you Stan for your Report on your cycling trip in England. As some of you know he returned home in November after 3 months spent in England and Germany and it has been great to have his brother-in-law from England cycling with us here in Mtunzini. I am sure Gordon is enjoying the sunshine!

Coast to Coast and Hadrian's route

August/September 2011

We started the Coast to Coast (C2C) ride from Whitehaven in northern England on Wednesday 24 August 2011 in the pouring rain. The downpour was so strong that within the first 3 km we were looking for a bridge to hide under to get out of the horizontal deluge.

I had flown to Germany on 16 August and then on to Manchester on 22 August to meet up with my brother in law, Gordon, and son in law, Uwe - both regular visitors to Mtunzini.

I took with me three Mtunzini cycling shirts (thanks to Debbie and Robyn for helping me out), together with three Zululand cycling shirts. We would definitely stand out in England. And so they do!!!





Unfortunately my bags with all my cycling kit didn't arrive in Manchester, but the bag was delivered the next day so all was well.

The C2C West to East route runs from Whitehaven in the North West of England, through the Lake District and across the Pennines to Sunderland. The East/West route would take us from Sunderland to Newcastle, up the Tyne valley to Carlisle. Then on to Solway Firth and down the North West coast ending where we started in Whitehaven. The logistics weren't too bad. We left a car safely parked in Whitehaven and it was still there 10 days later when we got back.

I was riding a Canyon full suspension bike which I brought over from Germany and my riding companions were riding hard tails.

Day 1 - 24 August

Drove up the M6 to Penrith, Keswick and Whitehaven. Dropped off our bags in Keswick for our overnight stay because we were too late to drop off in Whitehaven. Left Whitehaven at 12:30PM to ride to Keswick, up Winlatter Pass. Took the wrong Winlatter road but it was OK.

Day 2 - 25 August

We had breakfast at Keswick B&B then walked around the town for a while. We left at +- 10:30AM. I had to buy water en route - GBP6.00 for 1.5ltr!! Stopped at Greystoke Cycle Inn and had a great lunch. Bumped into the two Americans who are also cycling across C2C. We also saw them in Keswick. In fact we came across them all the way across England.

Beautiful weather the whole day, the only day we could wear short sleeves.

Penrith B&B was superb and very friendly. We had dinner in an Italian restaurant where there was a table of 14 year olds tottering around on high heels. It was very amusing.

Day 3 - 26 August

We set off from Penrith at 8:25AM after a good breakfast. Weather was cloudy with no rain. The climb out of Penrith is hellish and then down to Langwathby and to Old Meg Stone Circle where we stopped for a while. The big climb was Hartside (609m). It was very windy and for me it was the worst day of the tour. From Hartside to Alston is all downhill and very pleasant, but with lots of rain. We stayed in the Victoria Inn which was a bit of dump with a Thai/Cumbrian hostess - very weird accent.

Chatted to four bike riders who were riding from John 'o Groats to Landsend!!

Our final elevation was 326m.



Day 4 - 27 August

Miserable weather. Set off from Alston in pouring rain and stopped at the local Tin Mine museum, which was closed anyway!

Bad weather all day. Stopped in Allenheads for tea and cake. Highest point 610m. Ended at Parke Head at 458m. We couldn't ride the Rookhope Incline because they were grouse shooting, so we went on the main road out of Stanhope. There was a horrific climb up to Parkhead.

Parke Head was quite busy with a group of cyclists. Chatted to a Geordie couple who had ridden 60km up from Newcastle against the wind and were riding back tomorrow.

The shower was very strange, you pushed a button and the water came out for +/- 20 secs, and then you had to push the button again. I could write a book on the different showers we came across.

Day 5 - 28 August

Sunny but cold with very strong wind behind and across us. We took the old railway line from Parke Head down to Consett.

We stopped in Fatfield and rode along the river to where my Uncle Tom and Aunt Cilla used to live - Greenwood. There were some people in the street and I asked them if they remembered Tom and Cilla - the response was negative. Took some photos on Fatfield Bridge, next to Lambton Worm Hill!

We then followed the river Wear to Sunderland where a friend of ours, Tom Noble was waiting for us. We stayed with Tom and Irene for the next two nights near Sunderland.

There were other groups at Sunderland who had also just finished C2C. We took our obligatory photos - the first stage is over!

Ended up on 50m elevation.

Day 6 - 30 August

Visited the Roman remains at South Shields - very interesting. We then took the pedestrian underpass under the River Tyne. Unfortunately the escalators weren't working and the lift was only working on the other side. We carried our bikes down a long tunnel.

It rained on our way out of Newcastle. Had a great lunch in Newcastle on the quay side.

When we were riding along the Tyne River valley there was a group of mentally challenged young people. One boy had ridden his bicycle into the mud by the river. He was covered in sticky mud from head to foot.

We came past a man having a pee in the woods. He got the shock of his life when we went silently past. Highest point 225m, ended at 216m, 81km, 5 ½ hours. Ended at Slaley Farm which was high up from the Tyne valley. The climb up was never ending.

Walked to the Travellers Rest pub where we had great food, then we walked back to the farm across the fields.

Beautiful evening sky.

We heard that this was the coldest summer in 18 years in England - I believe it!

Day 7 - 31 August

Passed lots of Roman forts. Lunch in Haltwhistle - excellent.

Stayed at Abbey Bridge B&B, lovely area, well worth another visit.

Met other people staying at the B&B - Christine from Australia, sharing a room with her uncle, Malcolm from Rochdale.

Met Kirsten and Michael who are walking Hadrian's wall East to West. They were very tired.

Had a lovely, but expensive meal at the B&B.

Day 8 - 1 September

There was a long hard climb of 200m out of Brampton. We got a bit lost in Carlisle but eventually found the way. I was following the River Eden but the river was flowing the wrong way!

Rode to end of Hadrian's Wall and out to Solway. Bumped into a group of hikers in a pub where we stopped for lunch.

Finally got to Silloth for the night after a long day. We rode 85km today at average speed of 17.1kph. Very hard but OK. At one stage I left my back pack at a shop and I had to race back to collect it. It was still there.

There was a headwind all day, with lots of huge tractors on the road, and plenty of cow effluent.

There is one big company in Silloth - Carrs of Silloth. Is it a biscuit factory or a flour mill?

In the Queens hotel there is a serious bike basement with a metal manhole cover in the pavement which you open to drop down your bicycle.

There were four Dutch riders staying at the Queens Hotel doing the Way of The Roses from Hull to the Lake District, up to Whitehaven, across C2C and down from Sunderland to Hull.

Day 9 - 2 September

Excellent breakfast at the Queens Hotel and then we all waited for the wind and the rain to stop!

The wind blew against us for the whole day. We got quite lost in Workington but eventually found our way out of town.

We got to Whitehaven and took our photos. We picked up the car at Haven Cycles and had to change outside in the rain. They need changing rooms.

It would be better to stop at Silloth and take a taxi to Whitehaven.
There are some interesting coastal resorts with Roman ruins etc.

The full circle, West to East and East to West was +- 535km, with 6,400 metres of climbing, which was more than we had anticipated. The longest day's ride was 85km and the hardest climbing day was nearly 1,000 metres. I was the map reader and only made a few mistakes. We had great fun in the evenings and met some interesting fellow travellers - walkers and cyclists.



And for those who would like to follow in Stan's tyre tracks, a summary of his trip.

Date	Day	Minutes on bike	Average speed kph	Ascent	Day Distance Km	Cum Distance Km	Comments
24-Aug-11	Wed	230	14.2	788	54.5	55	Whitehaven to Keswick
25-Aug-11	Thu	152	14.8	476	37.3	92	Keswick to Penrith
26-Aug-11	Fri	181	12.4	728	37.4	129	Penrith to Alston - over Hartside
27-Aug-11	Sat	210	11.9	930	41.7	171	Alston to Parke Head/Stanhope
28-Aug-11	Sun	253	17.3	659	73.1	244	Parke Head to Sunderland
30-Aug-11	Tue	330	14.7	769	81.1	325	Sunderland to Slaley/Hexham
31-Aug-11	Wed	292	13.8	916	67.2	392	Slaley/Hexham to Brampton
01-Sep-11	Thu	300	17.1	682	85.1	477	Brampton to Silloth
02-Sep-11	Fri	250	13.4	459	55.9	533	Silloth to Whitehaven - strong head wind
TOTAL		2198	15.38	6407	533		

CYCLE RIDES:

Wednesday Afternoon Rides, 15h30 - Leaving from Robyn's house. This is a social occasion and anyone who would like to do a 20km+ ride should join her. Please sms her so that she knows that you are keen. (Robyn 083 417 1591).

Tuesday & Thursday Morning Rides, 5h00 - For the more serious rider. Meet at the x-roads (Corner of Valley and Siyayi). Give Frank or Fred a call if you would like to join them. (Frank 082 820 5701).

Thursday Afternoon, 17h00 - Contact Kevin (Kevin 092 379 1048)

Saturday Rides - 6h00 - Meeting at the x-roads. A figure of 8 can be arranged for those who would like to join in but not do a full length cycle. All are welcome. Remember no helmet no ride. (Let Frank or Kevin know if you are keen)

FORTHCOMING EVENTS to diarise now:

Outdoor and Fitness Expo 12th May 2012
The Buffalo Mtunzini 13th May 2012,
The Leopard Heatonville 24th June,
The Rhino Hluhluwe 22nd July 2012,
The Hippo Monzi 2nd September 2012,
The Lion Kwambo 30th September 2012,

The Gala Dinner 6th October.

The KZN MTB Calendar has been posted on the CKZN Website at the following link:
<http://www.cyclingkzn.co.za/events>

Please send me your cycling news.

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Contact numbers that you may find useful if you would like to find out about local rides: Robyn 083 417 1591, Frank 082 820 5701 and Shane 083 626 5450