

The Cairngorms Cyclist

Issue No 1: Autumn 2014



Welcome to the first edition of **The Cairngorms Cyclist**, a free seasonal E Newsletter which over the coming months, will showcase some of the world class cycling opportunities in and around the Cairngorms. With stunning scenery, and a comprehensive network of minor roads, tracks and trails, the Cairngorms offer a truly unique and varied cycling experience. Whatever your choice of tyre width or level of ability, there's something for everyone in the Cairngorms!

Bike Glenlivet - A First Milestone



Just 9 months after opening in November 2013, the new Glenlivet mountain bike centre has welcomed its 10,000th rider. Located 4 miles from Tomintoul, and with on-site parking, toilets, café, and bike hire, the Glenlivet trail centre has become a 'must ride' venue for both visiting and local mountain bikers alike.

Something for everyone at BikeGlenlivet

'The centre boasts a good mix of graded trails', says Vicky Hilton, Countryside Manager for Crown Estates. 'The red trail (22km) has bedded in well and is riding fast. After a steady climb you're rewarded with a panoramic view, followed by over 6km of downhill, including some optional 'black grade' features to keep the experts on their toes!'

The trails are also proving popular with families, and the blue trail (9km) is easy enough for young children and novice cyclists, yet with its twists and turns and ups and downs, it will hold the attention of the experienced too. 'It's been described by some as the best blue grade trail in Scotland, and our youngest rider – a 3 year old, would agree!'

Meanwhile back at the hub, the Coffee Still café is making a good impression with its decadent cakes, earning itself a reputation as a friendly, welcoming place to relax after a ride. VisitScotland have now added their seal of approval too, by awarding the Bike-Glenlivet centre a 4star "excellent" award.

Visit the [website](#) for details and opening times, or send them an [Email!](#)



In the News:

Double Commonwealth Gold for local Cairngorms cyclist!

Congratulations to Craig Mclean on winning [two gold medals](#) at the Commonwealth games, piloting Aberdonian Neil Fachie in the Tandem Para-sport time trial and the Para-sport sprint. A brilliant performance!

Aboyne Bike Park is now officially open! May saw the official opening of this community backed project, in the Bellwood, Aboyne. Bike Park details [here](#).

Bikes go for free on the Strathspey Steam Railway. Combine a ride out on your bike with a return trip on the [Strathspey Steam Railway](#). There's no charge for taking your bike on-board!

Danny MacAskill stopped by Bothy Bikes in Aviemore the other day to reminisce about one of his old bikes hanging in the shop.



You can have a go on it if you ask David. Go on [you know you want to!](#)

Cyclists are welcome at The Smugglers Hostel

Situated in the picturesque village of Tomintoul on the northern edge of the Cairngorms, [The Smugglers Hostel](#) is an ideal spot for you and your bike to 'tuck-up' for the night after a hard days riding. Only four miles from the [Glenlivet Trail Centre](#) it makes an ideal base for mountain bikers, whilst touring cyclists traversing the Cairngorms via the infamous A939 and The Lecht will appreciate the cycling friendly facilities on offer. These include secure bike storage and tools, a drying room, and a massive common room.....not forgetting free Wi-Fi for uploading your photos and video clips!

The Smugglers has been refurbished since its SYHA days, now boasting 4 star hostel accommodations at budget prices. Beds are available from £15/ person/night, and a range of dormitory and room options including en-suite make the hostel ideal for both individual and group bookings alike.



There are a number of options for [eating and drinking](#) in and around Tomintoul, from fine Highland cuisine at the [Clockhouse Restaurant](#), to tasty egg and bacon rolls and a mug of tea at [The Old Fire Station Tea Rooms](#), a popular haunt for local cyclists.

The Smugglers lays claim to being the highest hostel in the highest village in the Highlands, so if you are arriving by bike, you're sure to appreciate the hospitality on offer!



Visit the [website](#) to book yourself a space.

Local Knowledge!

Are you new to the area? Just visiting? What better way to get 'up to speed' on local routes and trails than to join a local ride-out.

[Mike's Bikes Aviemore](#)

Tuesday evenings, check their [Facebook](#) page for details.

[Bothy Bikes Aviemore](#)

Wednesday evenings, check their [Facebook](#) page for details.

Additional useful sources of information:

[Visit Cairngorms](#)

[Cairngorms National Park Authority](#)

[Mountain Weather Information Service](#)

Brush up your Mountain Biking Skills at Glenmore Lodge

'Cycling is going through an exciting time, and we are experiencing a surge of interest in our mountain biking courses and facilities' says Al Gilmour, Head of Mountain Biking at Glenmore Lodge.

'We are welcoming seasoned professionals and complete beginners at SportsScotland's national outdoor training centre. Not only are we based in the heart of the National Park with access to the best biking trails, but we've also got lots of exciting developments happening'

Construction of a new purpose built cycle workshop and classroom facility for delivering courses will soon begin. 'Our skills loop coaching facility in the Lodge grounds has also undergone a major makeover. With a new pump track, rock features, and an updated trials bike training and competition sector, we're ready for action!' Al is also looking forward to expanding his team. 'Due to growing course demands we're set to appoint a new mountain bike Instructor. This new role will assist with our continued commitment to encourage people to engage with sport throughout Scotland and beyond'.

The team at Glenmore Lodge are optimistic about the future; 'All the home nation cycling bodies (Scottish, Welsh and British Cycling) have come together to create a UK-wide suite of MTB Leadership awards to update and develop the current scheme. We're now rolling these courses out at the Lodge and are playing an integral role in supporting their rollout throughout Scotland'

Check out the [Glenmore Lodge website](#) for up to date information, or better still, pop in for a chat and meet the team!



Meet the Locals

Who are you, what do you do, and what's your connection with the Cairngorms? My name is [Cameron McNeish](#). I'm a writer and television presenter, a mountaineer and hillwalker, and a keen cyclist. I'm one of the presenters on the BBC Scotland programme The Adventure Show and I'm also editor of Scottish Walks and Scottish Cycling. I live in Newtonmore in the [Cairngorms National Park](#).



'Fat tyres', or 'skinny tyres'? I'm a skinny tyre man, although I do enjoy a twirl around forest tracks on my mountain bike. Essentially I'm a cycle tourer, a backpacker on wheels. For years I've walked Scotland's long distance trails and climbed her mountains and over the past few years I've developed my fondness for wild camping by touring bigger distances on a bike.

What's your favourite Cairngorms cycling route? The route I cycle most, a 30-mile jaunt from my home in Newtonmore, through Kingussie to Aviemore, then back home along [NCN7](#) through Inverdrue, Feshiebridge, Insh and Ruthven. It's slightly undulating on the return trip but it offers some great views across [Insh Marshes](#) to the hills of the west. Whenever I ride this route it reminds me of how fortunate I am to live in such an incredibly beautiful part of the world. I can't think of anywhere I would rather live.

'Coffee and cake' or 'tea and scones'? Occasionally, if I want to test myself, I'll ride from home and climb the big hill to Cairn Gorm. On the way home I'll invariably stop at the [Glenmore Café](#) for coffee and cake. To sit there and enjoy the birds and red squirrels is an absolute delight.

Your cycling highlight of the year? Two or three days ago I took a wee ride up Glen Feshie. The lower stretches of the road are forested but there was a moment when I burst free of the trees at Stronetoper and the vivid colour and beauty of the glen simply took my breath away. The heather had just come into bloom and the combination of the purple hues and the pale green of all the new growth in the glen was just stunning. There was something in that magic moment which summed up to me the sheer beauty and impressive scale of the Cairngorms.

Your next 'dream ride' in the Cairngorms will be... If I had a 'dream' ride in the Cairngorms it would be to cycle a circular route which followed the boundary of the Cairngorms National Park as closely as possible. What a bike ride that would be!

Did you know?

There's a new movement in mountain biking, and it's tinged with pink!



Since its establishment in 2012, [Petal Power](#), the Cairngorms based all-women's mountain biking club has gone from strength to strength. Membership is growing fast, with the club catering for riders of all abilities, from the complete novice to the experienced expert. The club organises a programme of led rides and skills training sessions giving members the opportunity to improve in both confidence and ability, and ultimately to develop 'Ride Leader' skills.

Petal Power organises the hugely popular '[Ride like a Grrl](#)' mass participation race, which features a choice of routes, superb trails and scenery....and large quantities of cake! The 2014 event was sold out some time ago, and if you take a look at this [video trailer](#), you can see why! If you're female and interested in giving mountain biking a go with a friendly and supportive group, then [get in touch](#). Who knows....next year it could be you on the start line!



To keep up to date, follow us on [Facebook](#)



The Event: 103 miles? 8,700 feet of ascent? You're 'avin a laugh!

On 1st June, almost 800 cyclists set off on what can only be described as a beautiful yet brutal 103 mile traverse of the Cairngorms, from Pitlochry to Cairngorm Mountain. The brain child of event organiser and stand-up comedian Alan Anderson, the 3Pistes Cycle Sportive offers a wonderful opportunity to cycle through the Cairngorms.

Alan's comedic background was perhaps evident in his route choice, which included over 8,700 feet of ascent, and took in all the major road climbs within the Cairngorms National Park - including the UK's 2 highest roads and 4 of Scotland's 6 highest passes. 'I wanted to create an event with a friendly atmosphere, which was both challenging and enjoyable in equal measure' says Alan with a wry smile. 'The opportunity to traverse a wild space like the Cairngorms on some of the best cycling roads in Scotland, make the 3Pistes a truly unique experience'.

The event is fully supported, with the option of coach transfer to the start, and regular well stocked feed stations along the route. Riders completed the course in times ranging from 5 ½ hours for the quickest, to over 11 hours for the more leisurely. The overwhelming impression however was one of rider camaraderie, and Alan is justifiably proud of the feedback he has received. 'Based on the comments and tweets that we've had from riders since the event, I'm delighted to confirm we will be running the 3Pistes Cycle Sportive again next year. The 2015 event will take place on Sunday 31st May. Visit the [British Cycling website](#) to enter, and you can find more details on our [event website](#) we'll see you at the start in 2015!



More photos of the 3Pistes [here](#)

Do the Ride Thing!

Mountain biking in the Cairngorms National Park is world class – an outstanding protected natural environment with a great network of paths and trails and fantastic purpose built trail centres at Laggan and Glenlivet. The Park is also home to many fragile habitats and protected species such as the Capercaillie. The biking community can help protect and conserve the National Park by riding responsibly.

"Do The Ride Thing" guide makes it easier for you to enjoy Scotland's outdoors by equipping you with the knowledge and understanding to explore this amazing National Park in a safe and responsible manner.

Chris Ball, Scottish Cycling National Downhill Coach says 'I hope this guide helps you to ride safely and responsibly but also inspires you to enjoy getting out there and riding as much as you can. Responsible access is a term you have probably heard and is the cornerstone of Scottish access rights. By respecting others and by learning how to share paths and trails, we can continue to promote mountain biking as a responsible and respectful activity.'

So...is your knowledge of how to ride the trails as good as you think it is? Check out the 'Do the Ride Thing' [on-line computer game](#) and see how much you really know!

Upcoming cycling events around the Cairngorms:

September:

[Bike Station Ballater](#), 'Falling Leaves' Stage race, 20th and 21st September

[Ride like a Grrl](#), 27th September

If you want to publicise your own event, [Email](#) the details, and we'll include them in the next edition.

In the next issue:

Leisure cycling on the Deeside Way, event reports, Electric Bikes, and more!

Have you got a good cycling story to tell? [Email](#) the editor.

[Subscribe to the next edition of The Cairngorms Cyclist HERE](#)

Cairngorms National Park Authority, 14 The Square, Grantown on Spey, PH26 3HG

Tel: 01479 873535, Fax: 01479 873527



Active Cairngorms: Find out about the many ways to get fit and active in the Cairngorms!

