



THURSDAY NIGHT RIDES 2018

March 8 , 2018

Report by Ron Milbanke

Not quite what we are used to on a Thursday evening. Seventy nine (79) names had to be typed onto the start list so the advertising had worked well. There were also three or so other riders who came just for the sausage and a play on the downhill tracks. It was great theatre as the fifty minutes ticked over and those who had finished, focused on the exploits of these downhill antics. A huge cheer went up as the leap across the creek was successfully completed in Levi Sherwood fashion.

So it was one of those events that will linger in the mind for a very long time. To see so many riders having great fun at the disneyland of mountain biking here in Blenheim, was a tribute to the hard work of the committee and especially to hosts Justin and Tory. This is what Jentree is renowned for, and for Justin to restore it to its former glory, and make it available, has added a huge asset to the mountain biking community.

The track began with the creek crossing. It was knee deep for adults, and some of the smaller riders would have sucked back as they tippy toed across the cool water. There was an interesting variety of crossing methods, some managed to ride it while others used their cyclo cross skills to quickly dismount and remount. The unfortunate unintentionally lay down in it. Luckily the course then began a long steady climb to help restore some heat into the cold bodies. It was a long zigzag climb in full view of the many spectators, the ants getting smaller as the elevation increased. With every climb there is the ultimate descent and consensus was that this one was reasonably friendly with a few tricky bits and rocks to negotiate. One or two light casualties were looked after by Lowri, one of her many duties on the night.

So with 79 riders, it would take a lot of typing to mention everyone. It was also a bit of a mission recording everyone as they crossed the start finish line. Luckily help was at hand to call out the numbers but even so one or two were missed. So some of the lap times have been extrapolated mainly for the first lap. No negotiations will be entered into to change the recorded times unless big money is on offer. We have no times recorded for Jack Nicholls or Chris Hebbard and we have some spare times listed that don't appear to belong to anyone. Apologies for this, I hope that this did not detract from your enjoyment.

There was a race going on at the front of the field and Jack shot away from the gun only to fall at the first sharp turn. This put him back in the queue to cross the creek allowing Bailey to get away to a small lead. They climbed the first zigzag together until Jack got to the front and began to stretch his lead. At the start of lap 2, Jack misread the arrows, went off course and lost a heap of time allowing Bailey to retake the lead. It took two laps of absolute effort for Jack to regain the lead, aided to some extent by heavy traffic hold ups on the skinny tracks. Host Justin estimated twelve minutes per lap, Jack set the bar at 11:03 on lap 3 and went on to finish his five laps ahead of Bailey, only these two managed five laps.

With 79 riders, there was a good mix of young and old, and some familiar names from the distant past dusted off their cleats to take part. It was obvious that some of them have been doing plenty of riding while avoiding our events. In the top ten, old hands Ken, Paul, Robert and Mondo mixed it with the two younger victors and young Finn, with Stuart, Abe and Dallas also to the fore. It was also great to see previous owners John and Jenny Meek along to watch the spectacle, joined by Greg and Nola Leov who of course would be very familiar with Jentree for a very long time.

It is hard to imagine that this evening can be replicated, it was very special. Thanks again to fantastic hosts Justin and Tory, and to all those who have helped prepare these tracks. There were many helpers on the night all contributing to a memorable event.

Next week we are back at the MTB park so we hope for another good turnout.