



CTC MOUNTAIN BIKERS

SCOTT CAMBER IS THE CHAIR OF BUCKSMTB, A CTC AFFILIATE CLUB FOR MOUNTAIN BIKERS THAT'S GETTING BIGGER EVERY MONTH. HE SPOKE TO DAN JOYCE ABOUT HOW THE CLUB DEVELOPED

You sometimes hear that people aren't into clubs these days, and that mountain bikers in particular are club averse.

That's not what Scott Camber has found. He's the chair and web guy of BucksMTB Club, which is based in the Chilterns but draws members from Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, and Oxfordshire as well as Buckinghamshire. Formed 18 months ago, it has over 40 members and is growing steadily.

'BucksMTB was originally an online database for local shops, trail guides, and biking news. We got a lot of interest in group rides, so we started running them. With large turnouts, we needed some sort of legislation and insurance. That's why we went down the club route.'

BucksMTB is in many ways a traditional cycling club, running weekly rides, trips away, social events, and so on. The only difference is the focus on mountain biking.

'We cover everything from youngsters and novice riding right through to quite extreme stuff,' says Scott. 'We had a club trip last weekend. We did Mount Snowdon, a couple of laps of the valleys of Snowdonia, and Llandegla on the way back. The novice rides tend to be at places

like Wendover Woods and the Ridgeway.'

While it counts both downhill and cross-country racers as members, BucksMTB is not primarily a racing club: it's a club for people who just like riding. Lots of mountain bikers do this unofficially, as the BucksMTB regulars used to do. The new club hit the ground running because of that informal rider network, plus the awareness of the BucksMTB name. The reason that it continues to grow, however, is that the club actively encourages new members.

'We have what we call an open ride

We have an 'open ride' every month. Non-members can turn up to try it

every month, for non-members as well as members,' says Scott. 'People can turn up for two rides before they have to join, so they can see if they like it. We've been getting 20-30 people each ride. The pace is always set to suit the slowest riders. And we try to have at least two leaders, so if we have a very mixed group we can split it.'

The open-arms attitude to new members is also fostered by the club's up-to-date online presence. 'We do a monthly

newsletter and regularly update the website,' says Scott. 'Social media is helpful too. We do a lot through Facebook.'

That's an effortless way to reach younger riders, in particular. But Scott isn't waiting for younger mountain bikers to discover the club. 'We try to fit in another ride each month that's family specific, youth specific, or a novice ride – which is open to all of the above. That's on top of the rides we run specifically for club members. And we've just started a series of coaching days for The Grange School in Aylesbury.'

The rides are led by CTC Trail Leaders, whose training was underpinned by Bike Club. 'Bike Club gave us the funding for the club set up fee and for various aspects, such as CRB checks, club equipment – storm shelters, that kind of thing. They also funded three Trail Leader courses, to upskill the staff, and two Assistant Trail Leaders, to get some under-18s on board.'

Being proactive is clearly a key part of BucksMTB's success. Scott thinks it's also because they don't focus solely on training or racing; the CTC affiliation clearly goes deeper than just the insurance benefits. 'It's about getting people out riding,' says Scott, 'being sociable, being shown some new trails, and promoting mountain biking. That's the ethos of the club.'

More details at bucksmtb.co.uk