Chair report 2024

On behalf of the committee and myself, I would like to warmly welcome you to the 2024 AGM of the Velo Club Venta cycling club.

We thank you for coming along this evening, your attendance and participation are greatly valued.  This is one of the most important opportunities for you to help shape the future of our fantastic community-based club for the coming and subsequent years.

 We would also like to thank Neil for hosting us at the South Downs Social again this year.

I want to extend a special thanks to the committee members who ensure the smooth running of the club, arrange events, races and coaching.  These events only go ahead with the support of the volunteers who gave up their time to ensure they were successful.  As a community-based sports club, you are our lifeblood, thank you all!

On behalf of the committee and personally, I have a special thank you to the committee members who have stood down this year, having made an important contribution to the club.

Thank you to Richard Sambrook-Smith, who for many years successful led the Go-ride program. The breeding ground for introducing young riders cycling skills, the club and then a pathway through into the youth and Junior sections.   Richard was also instrumental in updating the club website, creating the club shop and online payments.  Latterly, Richard was also our point of contact for the developers at Bushfield Camp, who he built a trusted relationship and advocated our vision for how cycling who enhance the Innovation Park.

Thank you to Jonnie Talbot-Weiss who stepped up to take on the treasure’s role, at a time that the role needed refreshing, with new ideas and approaches to the club’s financial management.  The club now has the bulk of its cash in higher interest rate accounts.  Jonnie will stay a member of the club even with his planned move to Germany, which we wish him well on.  I am pleased to announce that Steve Walters has taken on the treasure’s role, a role he was fulfilling with his Cycling Club in Lagos.  I think he “accepted” (well at least in my mind) the role on his first Sunday Club ride.  Once I heard about his interesting back story, I knew that he was perfect the role. Thank you, Steve.

Thank you to Becca Gilmour who has been looking after the club marketing and social media.   Amelia Eller has kindly agreed to take on these roles from Becca, thank you Amelia.

Thank you to Dave Morris who has been running the “Segment of the Month” for the past four years, providing lots of fun and pain for those participating and sourcing some nice sponsorship of prizes for the winners.  Alastair Mucklow has kindly agreed to continue to dish out some punishing segments for next year, as well as some changes to the rules and prizes, to encourage more people to suffer, I mean take part!!!

Like last year there are no proposed changes to the club constitution.

The club membership stands at 325including 58 new subscriptions this year.

The club continues to be financially very healthy, and the Treasurer will cover this as part of the agenda.  However, I would like to call out the fantastic long-term generosity and support of London Camera exchange.  We owe a very big thank you to Nick Richens for the financial support that allows us, amongst other activities, support youth and junior rider development across cycling disciplines, as well as encourage all members to try and be involved in racing or try something new like riding at National Cycling Velodrome.

As the club secretary noted in the AGM invitation the reports from the different club sections are posted on the website.

I would encourage you to read the reports, as they offer a great insight into all the club, it’s activities, ambitions and challenges across the different sections.

I would just like to mention some of the highlights:

Sunday Club Rides have continued to be well supported throughout the year, this is such a wonderful way to get out in the beautiful countryside, have a chat and in my case chat a lot of nonsense, whilst exercising. For the new members who have joined this is normally the pathway into the club.

The Tuesday Summer “chaingang” trainer rides were again well attended with a fast A (which was almost exclusively JP and anyone under 23) and the MAMIL B group.  In addition, Toby arranged a monthly ride for the youth and juniors focus on the technique of riding a Chaingang.   Also introduced during the summer, which for me was a highlight of the year, was the reimagined “City Lights” ride, which rather than being in Winter it was in Summer, rather than be in the city, it was in the countryside.  It was known as the “Kebab Van” ride due to the visit to the Tuesday night 2 for 1 kebab.  Seriously, this is significant and important, because it shows how a few people take a lead with an old club favourite, a Tuesday evening social ride, make it fun and numbers grow.  There were many occasions at the end of the summer that there more riders on “City Lights” than the Chainy.   Now winter is here and the winter chaingang is seemingly lost to Zwift and Zwift racing, the “City Lights” continue, seemingly whatever the weather.

The monthly Gravel rides have been a wonderful addition and success, with rides in the New Forest, Salisbury and on our local trails with as many as 31 people on them.  Thanks to Jorge, Neil, Nath, Jonnie and Paul for the routes and leading them.

The off-road and Cyclocross training ran throughout the year, with summer rides in Farley Mount and then to Strawberry Lane Rec as Cyclocross session approached for Cross specific training with Malcom and Jorge.  These sessions are for all ages and all abilities, Dirt Bike riding is fun!!

Remember!! If you pin a number on a Venta jersey, then you are part of the race team, to encourage members to give it a go!  We have subsided race entry fees for circuit, Cross and MTB races this year, as part of ‘Race as a team’ and will again in 2025.

There have been some amazing racing results this year. Probably one of the most successful and high-profile junior teams the club has had with Alistair Gardner, Bobby Buenfeld, Hamish Hunter and Tommy Stroud competing throughout the year in the National Junior Road Series. In the overall standings Alistair finished in 21st place with Bobby 39th and Hamish 53rd. Highlights of the series included Alistair and Hamish taking 2nd and 3rd on stage two at the Tour of the Mendips. Alistair also took 2nd place on stage two at the North West tour and then a 3rd and 2nd place on stages four and five of the prestigious Junior Tour of Wales. Hamish added a further podium with his second consecutive 3rd place on stage three of the Tour of the Mendips. Bobby’s best result in the series saw him take 5th place on stage four in Wales. Tommy performed consistently throughout the series, but his season ended on a high with victory at The Portmore Classic in Dorset in September. Hamish winning our own Road Race in style, soloing the last lap and having time to enjoy victory as he crossed the line.

While the juniors have undoubtedly achieved great success, our achievements have been across many disciplines and age group riders in multiple disciplines. We were able to celebrate another CTT National Champion in August when Alex Murphy took victory in the junior category at the National closed-circuit time trial championship at Goodwood. Alex had been racing as part of the Shibden Hope team at British Cycling sanctioned events during 2024 but continued to represent Venta at CTT events so this National jersey is ours.

Oscar Hoult winning the U23 and Elite Wessex Cyclocross League.   Judit Daniell was our placed (11th) female rider. Our V50’s won the team prize (Ty Miller, Ed Gurney, Chris Hutchings), with the V40s 3rd (Jorge Manso, David Spencer, Mike Warner)

In age group racing and wearing GB jerseys at World Championships.  Nick Tamey and Chris Pawesy at the Gravel World Championships, as well as Chris at The Grand Fondo Worlds.  Both require national qualification.   Malcolm also qualified for the World Gravels and as well as competing at the World Cyclocross championships with Ty Miller and David Spencer.  I have to mention that Malcom also made the top step of the Elite World Cyclocross championship in Tabor, before he and his fellow conspirators were removed by security and MVDP could take his rightful place!!!

GO-Ride, we were only able to run 9 out of 18 sessions due to the increasingly frequent traveller encampments. We have now reached the point of concluding that without better site security at the South P&R, we will need a new venue for 2025.  We are actively working on this and have a prospective site in mind.

There has been a lot of work in the background on developing an on and off-road cycling facility in Winchester.  To strengthen the voice of many sports clubs in the same position as us, Sport Winchester was formed.  We are member of Sport Winchester which has already started lobbying the developers of the three new sites in Winchester, the city council in formulating the next local plan.  There is a short and long-term vision.  The short-term is to find some existing facilities that could be unutilised quickly for Go-Ride and Off-Road training.  The local term is more ambitious but would be a purpose built on and off-road training facilities.  This is probably 5 to 10 years away, but if we don’t start now, then it will never happen.

Finally, the plan for 2025:

Expand the number volunteering and so expand the number of activities we can offer.

Fourth addition of the 3rd/4th RR on the Crawley circuit

The Winchester round of the Southern XC at Matterly Bowl

Open TT in April

Restart club TT as a competitive and social event

Work to secure a Cyclocross venue near Overton.

Peruse opportunities for a more permanent cycling-based centre under the Sport Winchester alliance

Youth/Junior race team and continue to build on the development of talented riders to bigger opportunities.

Retain the inter-club TT

Expand SOTM to include a veteran and super vet category and open up the monthly prize pot to more riders.