

Yorkshire Cyclo-Cross Association

2023 Annual Report

Introduction: **Richard Fenn, YCCA President:**

I was greatly honoured in March 2020 - shortly before the world came to a stop - to be elected as YCCA President in succession to the late John Rawnsley. I have been pleased to serve in that role as cyclo cross at first tentatively restarted between lockdowns in the autumn of that year, and once things returned to normal after a whole winter and summer without a Yorkshire series. In the last year I have appreciated being part of a committee with new members in key positions and which has moved forward as Yorkshire has kept its position at the forefront of the sport with excellent events both at established venues, including surely the best course in the country at Peel Park, and newer ones with Cliffe Castle and Graves Park returning to our programme after many years. Equally importantly, at the same time, Yorkshire events have never lost that welcome that I first felt as a very slow racer 35 years ago. My thanks to all who have contributed in any way to the success of Yorkshire cyclo cross in the last year, and, reluctant though I am to single one person out, in particular to Ted Sarmiento who took on the huge job of Secretary a year ago."

Chairman's Report: Andy Whitworth

Well, it's been a strange couple of years.

I was given the job of acting chairman a few years ago and officially took on the role just pre covid (I think, although memories of that period are a bit hazy) following the sad death of long-time chairman Peter Milsom after a brave battle with illness.

Peter had been a permanent fixture as chairman, all round wise Yorkshire 'cross sage and organiser ever since I started racing nearly 40 years ago including being one of the main players when Yorkshire organised the world championships in 1992. No really, we did! I was therefore honoured to assume the role that he had made his own for decades.

Even things that seem set in stone come to an end and change is inevitable as none of the old guard of ever-present Yorkshire volunteers, organisers and helpers, who we know and love, were getting any younger.

Indeed, we are all getting older and lifestyles and commitments change. I thought that I would race 'cross forever but after a disastrous 28th (for me) 3 Peaks last September, I have had to admit that the current issues I have with balance and vertigo may have curtailed my racing career.

So I can now become one of those failed racers who make the best officials as we all know!

When Fred announced that he would be stepping back from his role as secretary and "Mr Yorkshire cyclo-cross" we all wondered how the huge void would be filled as Fred was arguably a force of nature.

However, we need not have worried because true to form Yorkshire 'cross has thrown up a few more forces of nature and roles have been adapted, added to and suitably filled by a troop of enthusiastic and very capable individuals whose love of this great sport of ours is self-evident.

Shibden CC have stepped up time and time again led by the tireless Spencer clan and the seamless change and continuation of all that we know and love is in no small part thanks to them and their members.

A couple of years ago we looked to have a rocky future but I am glad to say that Yorkshire 'cross is alive and thriving once more with a solid core of volunteers and officials never scared of tackling salient issues such as providing proper races and prizes for women and addressing the cost of living crisis by reducing entry fees to give everyone a better chance to enjoy their racing.

The future is bright and it's fantastic to see new organisers and venues appearing on the calendar.

Secretary's Report: Ted Sarmiento

YCCA Committee

After last year's AGM a new Secretary, Treasurer and Communications Officers were appointed.

We began by holding a series of Committee meetings which continued throughout the year (mostly on the MS Teams virtual platform) to determine the structure of our racing and I would like to thank everyone on the Committee for their valuable contributions, especially with us having to make some really quite tricky decisions, often in very short timescales as well as many of us being new to the roles this year. The combination of a diversity of views and frequently held meetings seems to have resulted in good, crisp, clear decision making, not always to everyone's liking, but always to the consensus of the group and implemented without fuss. These aspects of the Committee are important to take forward into next year.

I would particularly like to thank Andy Whitworth our Chair for keeping us focused and on time each meeting and Richard Fenn our President for always providing eloquent and well-reasoned viewpoints.

The season would not have been possible without the some very heavy input from our new Communications Officer Phil Ingham and our new Treasurer Keith Finnett.

Phil has been setting up all the races on the BC website for online entry, liaising with Smartiming to have all the race numbers and chips for each event and tidying up afterwards with BC for allocations of Ranking points. He has also set up and written about 90% of the content (despite outward appearances) for the "Stakes and Chips" newsletter as well putting out most of our social media posts and CX Hubz information and notifications that have kept all our riders in the know all season. Phil has also very visible on race days setting up and taking down courses and occasionally racing (and annoyingly beating) me on a few occasions and provided the BBC with two stand out interviews about our racing this year.

Keith has provided all the data work for gridding and series standings as well as looking after all the financial transactions for every race. We have been able to reduce our entry fees largely due to Keith's detailed financial planning and he has paid out all the race expenses, prize monies and organiser club bonuses at the end of the season. While not strictly a Treasurer role Keith has provided the lions share of the race day handing out of the winners "Champagne" as well as helping set up and take down several courses.

I will mention the commissaires, races and race organisers below and without them and their supportive club mates the season would not be possible.

A quick review of the season's racing:

In Summer we went to Hunsworth (twice!) thanks to Shibden CC's Ian Spencer and Phil Ingham, Yorksport with Clifton CC and Russell Gordon, Bradley Woods courtesy of our Chair Andy Whitworth, Killighall Moor hosted by Harrogate Nova's Tim Evans, Cliffe Castle organised by Mark Barker and administered by Davey Johnson of Bronte Tykes and finally Holmfirth where Andy Akers and the team from Trek Sheffield Fox Valley put on a great last round for us.

Winter got off to a very rocky start when our original venue pulled the plug on us at the last minute, however we must look back and thank the Shibden CC crew led by Ian Spencer for hastily re-

organising the race at Hunsworth. It is fair to say that Ian has put in a big shift throughout this season's events and I would want to thank him very much for this input.

Things were a bit smoother after Round 1 and for Round 2 we visited Myrtle Park Bingley where we drew our largest racing numbers on a very twisty course organised by Mark (three pairs of hurdles) Barker and the Bronte Tykes. This was followed by a trip to Thornes Park Wakefield where the Huddersfield Star Wheelers, marshalled by Richard Edwards, put on a great day's racing.

A classic YCCA race was organised by Seacroft Wheelers and Martin Clough (from a seated position) using an excellent new variation in the much loved/dreaded Temple Newsam course which this season was warm and dry. Our next stop was 'racing from Pontefract' with Tony Jones and Tom Randall of Knottingley Velo finding us some great lines around the horseracing course. Then, a first visit in a long while to Graves Park in Sheffield found us on a brilliant course designed by James Hawkins from the Yomp Bonk Crew.

As it was our turn to put on the Regional Championships Russell Gordon (InSync Coaching) and Clifton CC stepped up and hosted a very popular but seriously muddy day of racing at Yorksport. Our penultimate race day was at a frozen Tong – another venue we haven't visited in a while – where Phil Ingham and the Shibden CC collective put out an excellent and testing course to keep our riders warm!

It was very fitting that our final race of the 2022-23 season was at the iconic Peel Park venue in Bradford where we remembered Mike Scott and saw an iconic battle between his son Tom and crowd favourite V50 Nick Craig. Thanks here go to Keith Finnett for the course design which seemed very popular as judged by some of our most seasoned Peel Park racers. We also used this opportunity for some fundraising for the Mike Scott fund through donations and a bring an buy sale, an idea initiated by Tom Scott.

A note of thanks also to Richard Fenn who organised our Commissaire rota for the Summer and Winter seasons (as well as officiating himself on a number of occasions) and to that end I'd also like to thank Commissaires Tim Evans, Darrell Bradbury, Andy Whitworth, Lynn Bland, Martin Burkinshaw, Graham Parker, Peter Charlton and Mandy Parker – who also looks after our U12 racing contingent making sure they enjoy themselves.

I would also like to thank everyone who at some point in the season put a peg in the ground or pulled one up, or put out or took down some course tape. (Though not those who did it during their own race and you know who you are!) It is this collective effort that makes cyclo cross racing possible and fun.

I'd like to thank Andy Cook of Trek Sheffield Fox Valley and the Trek Bicycle Corporation who have provided us with around £3,000 worth of stakes, miles and miles of course tape and the feather flags which feature behind all our winners' podiums. Thanks also to InSync Coaching a.k.a. Russell Gordon's coaching company who have provided us with all the racing arm numbers.

This season also saw the introduction of the stand-alone women's race which was preceded by some women's specific coaching sessions organised by Alison Kinloch and Nikola Matthews. By all accounts from the riders perspective this has been a big success and spectators and pit support crews also seemed to have enjoyed watching these races play out instead of being among a load of male V50s. And while it has created a busier race day schedule for sure, I'd hope most would agree this is something we'd like to continue and build on.

Our Team Manager Chris Young organised a weekend racing trip to Wuustwezel and Huesden-Zolder in Belgium for some of our promising Youth racers and we were able to take eight riders supported by four volunteers Chris, Keven Smith, Lisa Green and myself. The riders seemed to really enjoy a different racing experience and a whole new set of competitors. The trip was funded by the Mike Scott Memorial Fund and the British Cyclo Cross Trust to which all riders have thanked for the amazing support. Chris also helped some Junior racers with a trip around the busy Christmas race season again with some support from the same funds.

All in all, a great season of racing, but lest we forget all the races prior to Tong were carried out without the presence of any pressure washers due to the water shortages in our local reservoirs and more than one person has remarked to me about the wonderfully quiet atmosphere in the pits area as a result. The resurgence of the bucket and brush was highly effective in this scenario and gave some of our older pit crews a nostalgic reminder of the good old days of 'cross and our thanks go to everyone who complied with this temporary restriction without any fuss.

One new change that we will be introducing starting this summer is random gridding for our Under 9 and Under 12 racers. These categories will be issued with a random race number and this will now also correspond to the riders placing on the start line in the same manner as all our other race categories. So riders 1 to 10 will form the front row, 11 to 20 second row, etc.

Looking to The Future – We Still Need More Help

It should come as no surprise to anyone reading all this that we need more help with the putting on of our race series, you do not have to be a member of the Committee, or even a member of a cycling club that is hosting as race to volunteer your help to put a race on.

We would strongly encourage all racers to join a club that are organising a race (as second claim if necessary) or simply contact the organising club (or us at YCCA) to offer your assistance on race day or beforehand to help set up the course for example.

The AGM is your opportunity to offer some help, offer to join the Committee to take on a role, and generally find out more about YCCA. It is also your opportunity to present any ideas or suggestions for our racing and for me personally I'd love to hear more ideas about how we can make race days easier to reduce the load on some individuals (who are contributing possibly too much) so that we can all enjoy some racing, whether that's on a bike, in the pits, spectating or however you like to enjoy your 'cross.

The AGM format will be a bit different from previous years, we would like to get your feedback on the past Summer and Winter series as well as any proposed changes as to how we run our events and series. These will then be considered by the newly formed Committee in due course when we next meet at one of our regular sessions (see below).

Cyclo-Cross is a team sport where “many hands make light work” is our best descriptor.

I look forward to see you at the AGM and please get your nominations to join the Committee and/or your proposals for YCCA events/racing to me before Wednesday 12th April to:

yccasecretary@outlook.com