



Moss Bross Stainburn's full of natural challenges



Fall-line action: steep and deep

interaction with terra firma that culminated in a hairball of profanity. "I'm going home, selling the bike and taking up knitting," pronounced Rich, displaying the kind of gritty determination that saw us through two world wars. "Mind you, I'll probably end up with a needle in my eye."

As Rich so aptly demonstrated, grip is an ephemeral commodity on the Norwood Edge trail. One minute you're in the midst of a super-size traction binge, then bam! You cross a transverse root and you're on the deck before you can get your hands off the bars. That, coupled with the proliferation of mossy rock punctuating the soil, and the digger's affinity for taking trails down the fall line, and you've got a chess game between balance and gravity. Trimming slots in the mulch, squeezing through gaps in the rock, tensing over tangles of tubers. It's a technician's dream.

Mancunian banter

Mark's Mancunian banter pierced the stillness of the forest as we followed the waymarked trail. Frequently overtaken by his mouth on the more technical sections, he injected a refreshing dose of enthusiasm into our group of cynical old hacks and jaded locals. "This beats working," he kept chiming. And he was right.

We pushed on, conscious that we could lose hours threading the needle on Norwood Edge's anorexic maze. Warren Boulder beckoned, so we turned south, back across the road and through the car park. Lee gave us a quick primer about what lay ahead: "When we conceived the idea of the Warren Boulder Trail, we knew it would be a short trail because of the amount of work involved. We decided to make it as technical as possible so it wouldn't be over in a flash." After we'd swung through a series of stone-

bordered sweepers, the trail warmed up, firing a volley of rocky steps at our front wheels — a taster of the battle to come.

The trees subsided and a retarding corner brought us to the entrance to 'the Slab', part of the aptly-named 'Boneshaker' section. If one section epitomises the whole of the Warren Boulder Trail, it's this. A crushingly vast monolith, slick, moss-riddled and tilted like a seesaw saddled by Laurel and Hardy. There's more around the corner — a tech-y spine stone with a profile like a stegosaurus' back, and tight, precipitous plunges over jagged drops — but on the day we were there, after 500 metres the trail fizzled out. And to get this far, a trail crew of around 20 has slaved a day, a month for 10 months. To call it merely a labour of love would be an injustice. Stainburn is a painstaking, backbreaking, palm-blistering millstone. A self-imposed monthly goliath on the calendar of the SingletrAction volunteers.

Positioned by hand

While the Slab is perhaps the deserved centrepiece, SingletrAction's hard work deserves that you go back and look at the details. Every rock and boulder has been extracted, lifted and positioned by hand.

Between the bigger stones, a mosaic of rocks and pebbles has been laid. Progress has been slow, but as Lee pointed out, doubling the amount of volunteers would transform their work rate, and with such a strong riding community within striking distance of Stainburn, that should be a realistic proposition.

Where Stainburn will continue to struggle, is in securing funding. "Unfortunately it sits within what's called the 'Golden Triangle'," explains Lee, whose day job is flogging Bang and Olufsen gear to Yorkshire's new money. "This is the wealthiest part of the county, so it's tough getting cash for projects such as this."

It's a different story down the road in Dalby Forest, though. SingletrAction has big plans for the area. In partnership with Forest Enterprise and Ryedale District County Council, they've applied for funding to build a 40-kilometre network of cross-country trails, downhill tracks and a skills area, all built to the highest standard. This will be a grand scheme, on the scale of the Welsh and Scottish Forestry centres, using contracted trail-builders while SingletrAction acts →



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