



April 2019

THUNDERCROSS VALLEY DIRT BIKE PARK

BACKGROUND ARTICLE FOR GENERAL RELEASE

James Fowlie, founder and owner of Thundercross Valley Dirt Bike Park (Thundercross), has a rich and colourful background. A local Waikato man, one of eight children and a miner's son, he grew up in the Huntly area and played high-profile Waikato Club Rugby. He was selected to play against the Springboks in their ill-fated 1981 tour and was a regular in the Fiji 7s tournaments for many years,

Following Lincoln Agricultural College, he had a long career with the Ministry of Agriculture as a meat inspector and union representative until redundancy in 1990 brought an end to that and James became a full-time farmer on his first farm, north west of Morrinsville.

When he and his family bought Thundercross in 1999, it had been specifically chosen with dirt bike tracks in mind. His teenage son and daughter were both champion dirt bike riders, so James decided to create tracks around the farm for the children to practice on. Being in close-proximity to both Auckland and Hamilton, they opened the Park to the public and Thundercross Valley Dirt Bike Park was born. It has been popular with local, national and international visitors ever since and continues to grow.

At that stage, in his mid-40s, James was a 'dirt-biking Dad', driving his children around the country to compete. Having already stopped playing competitive Rugby he decided to give dirt-bike riding a go. Turns out he was rather good at it and now has a cabinet full of trophies to show for it! Twenty years later, long after his children have stopped competing, he is the oldest rider in the NZ Enduro and Cross-Country Championship dirt bike circuit and, this year, will become the only Gold Card holder in the field.

In 2010, having actively farmed sheep and beef for 20 years, James leased out the land at Thundercross to a neighbouring farmer so that he could focus on running the Bike Park and a local Quarry that he operates.

He is a man of many interests; in addition to dirt-biking and being an avid reader, he participates recreationally in a wide range of activities. As a long-devoted and dedicated yogi, he recently took a year off to go back to school full-time and qualify as a yoga teacher. He now teaches restorative yoga to Parkinson's' patients and people with head injuries. He is also a regular and experienced dancer of Ceroc, still taking part in team performances at regional and national competitions.

James is assisted by his partner, Mandy, who has a background in change management and project management. With a family background in sailing, she was the first female director of Yachting NZ and the NZ Coordinator of the Around Alone global yacht race. Her administrative and operational skills are put to good use in helping to run the Park.

James' children, Nik and Danie, often teach at Thundercross and bring their champion riding experience plus their own professional backgrounds to the family table. Nik is a qualified mechanic and, for several years, taught freestyle BMX at Camp Woodward in California. Danie was previously with Air NZ and is now Event Manager for a national sport. The marketing and strategic experience of Rob, James' son-in-law completes the family picture.

Thundercross Valley Dirt Bike Park is in an exciting growth phase. With online booking and electronic registration about to go live through Rezdy and Wherewolf respectively, riders will be able to book their experience at Thundercross and pay online (including AliPay and WeChatPay) without having to touch a piece of paper.

Also planned for the very near future are the conversion of the Park's 100-year old historic Wool Shed to a café; construction of cabins and off-grid glamping for accommodation and the hosting of Maori cultural evenings, complete with traditional hangi dinners.

Combined with Thundercross' own attractions, there are many other local activities nearby to enjoy including Nikau Caves, GoSkyDive and Hampton Downs Motorsport Park, making this a destination definitely worth visiting!

James and the family all look forward to welcoming you to their patch of this beautiful Waikato region very soon.