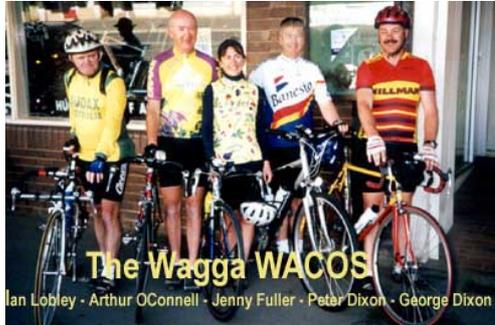


Bicycle Wagga Wagga – Ride Report Opperman All Day Trial 2001

WAGGA WAGGA TO ROCHESTER – 10-11 November 2001

Past years has seen many teams depart from Wagga Wagga and 2001 was no different. Two teams left from Wagga Wagga; the Wagga Wacos and Woman And Guys Going Around.



The WACOS at the start.

The Wagga Wacos was captained by Ian Loblely, who has successfully ridden this event twice before. Ian lead a team of novices on a route of 370km. Ian was joined by local Peter Dixon, Peter's brother, George, from Melbourne, and Jennifer Fuller and Arthur O'Connell from Cooma. With the riders being dispersed it had proven difficult to train together as a team however they had completed some 100km and 200km rides.

The other team, Woman And Guys Going Around (WAGGA), was lead by Ray Stenhouse. This was a team of three after the unfortunate withdrawal of the fourth team member due to illness. The team was comprised of Ray, Narelle Hobson from Junee and Craig Gibbins from Mangoplah. While Ray and Narelle had previously ridden in this event this was the first attempt for Craig. The route chosen calculated out at 400km.

Generally the teams followed similar routes passing through Henty, Walbundrie, Howlong, Corowa, Mulwala, Yarrawonga, Numurkah, Nathalia, Kyabram and finally Rochester. The WAGGA team made up the extra kilometres between Henty and Walbundrie and Yarrawonga and Numurkah.

With so many cyclists involved in the Port to Port from Mildura to Echuca you'd think that the winds, being the cyclists' enemy, would pick on the majority and be easterlies. However, both teams departed from Kidson's Cycles and immediately turned into a headwind. The WAGGA team had the early lead but were overtaken between Yerong Creek and Henty. The gap at Henty was about 50 metres as the WAGGA team continued down the Olympic Highway to Culcairn for their first control.

Between Henty and Culcairn a sign had been erected by Shayne Godde, who had ridden the Oppy with Narelle two years ago, which gave the team some encouragement to continue their battle into the wind. A bit further down the road was Shayne herself, returning home after taking care of electoral duties. Shayne yelled out wanting to know where the rest of the team was when she saw there were only three riders.

The strong wind seemed to swirl around and it was difficult to get a sit. One minute it was to the left, the next to the right, and there was little rest for the trailing riders as they sought the elusive drag. This constant pressure began to take its toll as Narelle started to have problems with her feet. A couple of times the riders dismounted to give Narelle a break and to take a quick rest. Both teams arrived within 10 minutes of each other at Yarrawonga where a larger break was had. An interesting sight on this leg was a young female standing up to the back window of a mini bus showing the WAGGA team the new black bra she had just purchased. At least, I think that's what she was doing.

Upon leaving Yarrawonga the Wacos headed to Katamatite, and then to Numurkah arriving at the motel at about 10:15pm. Jennifer met an interesting chap in the hotel at Katamatite who, when told where they were going and where they had already come from expressed his astonishment in a very colourful way. The WAGGA team headed from Yarrawonga to Cobram, onto Strathmerton and then down to Numurkah. At Cobram a longer than intended stop occurred and

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the opportunity to take on cold weather gear was taken. This later proved to be very fortuitous as the temperature dropped dramatically. A few spots of rain were felt just on riding into Strathmerton but that was the extent of it. Craig suffered a puncture at the railway level crossing in Strathmerton. Fortunately there was a light pole handy under which the tube was replaced. Unfortunately Craig used a previously patched tube which had a slow leak resulting in two more stops for extra air before arriving at Numurkah at 11:15pm. By that time the Wacos were fed, watered, washed and resting. Craig changed his leaking tube for a new one as the team readied themselves for the following morning.

The WACOS arose early and departed from the motel at 3:45am. The WAGGA team was on the road at 4:00am. Riding through Numurkah on the way out the people standing in the hotel car park offered some less than encouraging words but at least the cyclists were doing something to keep warm. At least, that's what they thought. The leg across to Nathalia and then around to Wyuna and down to Kyabram was freezing or close to it. Average temperature was 2 degrees so subtracting the wind chill factor it would have been below. It was very cold on the bike causing the riders to arrive at Kyabram looking for warm drinks.



The WACOS after 370km in 24hrs.

The WACOS made good time on this leg while the 300km the day before and only three riders was starting to show on the WAGGA mob. The WACOS reached and departed from Kyabram before 7:00am whereas the WAGGA team struggled in just on 7:00am averaging under 20km/h since Numurkah. With 38km to go, and heading directly back into that wind, it didn't look too promising for the WAGGA team.

A quick feed, a few encouraging words, and the test was on - could they make it before 9:00am? The thought of doing all that hard work and missing out on being in Rochester by 9:00am spurred them on and they lifted the pace a little.

Craig retained the KOM title he won on one of the training rides as he pulled the team over Mount Scobie and by then the chances of arriving before 9:00 were looking better.

At 8:50am the WAGGA team rolled across the finish line at the Oppy monument, happy and relieved that it was all over, to be greeted by the WACOS and others. The WACOS had finished at 8:15 and had overcome their urges to hit the hot showers to wait for the others. The WACOS won the Best Name competition beating some stiff opposition.

The hot showers were especially welcome and the bacon and eggs tasted pretty good too. The stories of other teams' experiences filtered through with tales of rain, hail and hills. Craig was heard to say along the way that he wouldn't have minded some rain if the wind would go away but I'm not certain that we would have wanted the hail. One cyclist's headwind is another cyclist's tailwind I suppose.

Congratulations to all the Oppy teams. Each team would have had their own challenges that had to be overcome one way or another. If it wasn't the weather, it may have been the terrain, or a mechanical problem, or whatever. If it was easy then everybody would do it and there wouldn't be the feeling of satisfaction that you get when you've finished an Oppy.

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WACOS Support Team.
Fiona Dixon, Sue Lobley
and Pauline Dixon

A big thank you goes to the support teams. Without them we wouldn't have been able to do it. The WACOS was supported by Sue Lobley, a seasoned supporter having supported Ian on his previous rides. The Dixon families also contributed along the way with a cheering crowd on tap at each control. The WAGGA team was ably supported by Lynette Stenhouse, also a support veteran. Another big thank you to Phil Bellette and his team.

There must be hours of work in organising this event and Phil seems to be there year after year doing what has to be done. Great job Phil, but if you could organise the wind a bit better for us next year we'd be really happy.