

WARRAGAMBA TO COOTAMUNDRA – 15 to 23 March 2003



The annual RTA Big Ride has come and gone once again. Wagga Wagga had a strong contingent of experienced and novice riders take part in the 9-day ride from Warragamba in Sydney's west to Cootamundra.

The bus was packed with people, bikes and luggage and travelled up to the start on the Friday prior to the ride. We were fortunate in that we were permitted to stay at the first night's camp at Camden. After a restful night's sleep for some, the eager riders took the opportunity to warm up for the ride by cycling to Warragamba whereas several others, for one reason or another (do you really need a front wheel?), took the bus to the start.

Upon arriving at Camden at least one of the tents had been relocated by a person, or persons, unknown. The occupant of this tent met a lot of new people the ride as he was regularly asked who he was and where he was from by interested neighbours the following mornings.

Dinner the first night was held in the rain however this did not dampen the riders' spirits too much and was a good test of the waterproofness of the tents.

The second day to Bowral saw the first of the hills. Despite this it was pleasant riding across to Oakdale and Bargo. There was some more overnight rain but dinner was dry.

Day three to Bundanoon was a pretty ride spoiled by the uphill into Robertson for morning tea. Lunch was at the Fitzroy Falls Dam picnic area which was very pleasant. Again rain dropped from the sky making for some interesting riding, especially with the nice big downhill into Bundanoon.

Day four saw some interesting events. At Tallong, one of the novice riders, now being used to queues for everything placed herself in the queue for the men's' loos Another novice rider decided to put some style into her dismount as she cruised in. The degree of difficulty was acute, the execution off just a little and the result was a spectacular domino effect with one bike being slightly injured. Another of the riders had his downhill roll into Goulburn curtailed by a blow-out and a mechanical failure saw a 27 geared bike reduced to a single gear bike.

The rest day at Goulburn saw some people experience the camping lifestyle while others headed off to more solid accommodations. The opportunities to sight-see, repair bikes, or do nothing were taken. A squall that evening tested the tents once again.

Day six, to Bungendore, proved to be a challenge. There was reasonable assistance to Windellama but from there on it was very hard with huge gusts of wind making going difficult. This was one of the longest days and the wind made it all the more difficult. Overnight it was a bit chilly but there were no cases of hypothermia.

The following day to Yass also was a challenge, particularly after the previous hard day. However, the thought of seeing their family, and a celebration afterwards no doubt helped keep some of the riders focussed on the target. The best Mixed Grill since Wellington was discovered and nearly consumed.

There was a very chilly start to the day to Harden, but it was not as cold as when the ride last visited Yass. Just to make it interesting the route planners discovered every hill that could be climbed and put the riders across these.

The final day had arrived all too quickly and it was off to Cootamundra. It was generally uphill to morning tea and then a few more hills followed by some nice downhill to finish off with. Having assembled for the run to the finish some photos were taken before the riders pushed off for the final few kilometres.

One of our number decided that this was not enough and packed the pannier and set off reaching Wagga Wagga that evening and was home in Henty the following day.

The riders ranged in age and experience. There were several riders just new to riding, one who has only been riding about two months, who took on the challenge to participate in the ride. All, old and new, can be pleased with their efforts and many will already be looking forward to the next Big Ride.

The ride gave people the opportunity to expand their horizons, meet and re-meet friends, to see countryside from the saddle of a bike and to get some good healthy exercise. If you have thought about participating but have been concerned about your ability then don't hesitate to ask some of the riders from this year. They are sure to tell you to come along and enjoy the fun.

Without the time, efforts and generosity of volunteers the RTA Big Ride would not occur. Milton and Sandra Wilson again headed the Massage Team that provided comfort to many tired and tested riders. The team raised over \$3000 for Multiple Sclerosis through their efforts and kept many a bike rider out on the road.