

Gourmet Cycling - 22-23 May 2004 - Ray Stenhouse

The ride leader had gone to extraordinary lengths, in fact the whole route, just to make certain that nobody would perish on this ride, especially from lack of sustenance. Gordon had taken it upon himself to check out that there would be ample opportunities to replenish spent energy as he had a food flat once and never wants anyone to suffer the same misfortune.

Saturday morning saw the cyclists gathering at the Wagga Beach almost chomping at the bit to get away. The Glastonburys arrived in time to catch the group as they put their feet to the pedals and began the 90km trip to Adelong. There was a minor delay as Gordon organised his co-pilot, his granddaughter Chloe, for the first stint but there was nothing to dampen the enthusiasm of the riders as they headed eastward. Well, of course, there was a bit of a headwind but when isn't there?

At the Wagga Wagga Winery, which strangely enough is at Oura, Gordon changed co-pilots. This time grandson Jake climbed aboard the Gordy Express although the hills did start to come into play a bit more after Oura. The co-pilot later bailed out upon discovering that some vital equipment had been dropped somewhere along the road which left Gordon the rest of the way to pedal without assistance.

At the Wantabadgery Store a veritable smorgasbord of foodstuffs allowed the riders to refuel. Jeff and Bruce joined the group at this point having begun their journeys from Old Junee and Junee respectively. The next leg, across to Tumblong, is a lovely run down to the river, followed by some ups and downs to the Hume Highway. Ben took over the driving duties which allowed Barbara to enjoy this section. Ben's time off the bike also allowed Craig to do a wheel swap as his front tyre had suffered from a close encounter of the sharp kind with one of the cathead burs.

The Tumblong Hotel had been primed by Gordon during his reconnaissance and was ready, willing and able to provide the cyclists with whatever took their fancy. Most opted for a pasta dish although hamburgers and fisherman's baskets were also demolished with gusto. Ben did the repair on Craig's tube as he waited for the troops to finally assemble much to Craig's delight. Nicholas enjoyed the trampoline, jumping up and down with all the energy of a 4 year old, which was good seeing it was his fourth birthday.

The next stop was the Old Pharmacy where the ride leader's personal recommendation was 'Waffles, maple syrup & ice cream (2 scoops)'. Gordon had done his homework and the waffles were delicious as was the other fare that was enjoyed with the coffee at the end of the day's ride. After a bit of rest and respite the troops bar Andrew and Judith, who would be accommodated at the Old Pharmacy, made their way to the Royal Hotel to lock up bikes, and rush for the showers and make ready for dinner.

Suitably showered, some warmer than others, and dressed for the occasion a few pre-dinner drinks were enjoyed on the balcony of the Royal before the group adjourned to the bar for another pre-dinner drink before taking up their selected chair in the dining room. A fine meal was prepared by the chef for each and everyone and no-one left the table feeling unsatisfied. There was a minor mix-up with an extra dessert being delivered but it didn't go to waste. There wasn't much fuss made about the return of the day for Lisa who quietly admitted to having passed her fourth birthday several years ago. David actually remembered this occasion unlike his effort at Pleasant Hills where another significant day slipped by almost unnoticed.

Most people enjoyed some socializing before the efforts of the day started to be felt and those with beds upstairs headed upstairs and those with beds down the road went down the road. There was a band downstairs which finished around midnight and there was some literal fireworks after closing time and well as some discussion amongst the locals about which was the

best way to go home that disturbed the slumbers of some for a short time but other than that a restful night's sleep was enjoyed.

Louise, David and Gordon were up early and had a monster breakfast of porridge, plus bacon, eggs, tomatoes and toast prepared when most ventured forth at around 7:00am. Gordon had catered to perfection with everyone having their fill. Gordon warned that there was a climb or two before morning tea and that it would be very bad form to have eaten insufficiently to get you there.

With a bit of climbing to do before the promised 'mostly downhill' section home saw the riders out on the road around 8:00am. It was a bit cooler but soon the bodies were warm with the energy output required to get to Wondalga and the body temperatures rose as steadily as did the road before the spinning wheels after there. Bruce must have been reading Lance Armstrong books as he took on Ben and Ray with seeming ease. Craig and Jeff rode ahead to clear the way. David, while saying it was his cracked rim, did the gentlemanly thing and rode at the back to assist any that should require it. Everyone found a pace that they were comfortable with and eventually the uphill stopped.

Morning tea at the edge of the orchard was an enjoyable affair and the last of Nicholas' cake disappeared. Some people put their bikes on the racks while others removed theirs and set off looking for their next feed. Due to the anticipated slowness across upcoming gravel sections some riders, Lyn, Barbara, Bruce and Leith with Jake providing supplementary power, departed early and had first use of the promised downhill from morning tea.

While the description 'mostly downhill' may be strictly correct there seemed to be some 'mostly uphill' sections in this section to lunch. The dirt sections - these weren't nice smooth gravel, these were quite rough in places - but you could ride across these safely if you took your time and picked your line very carefully. But we can't complain. Well, we can, and we do, but everyone that rode this section made it across without any falls or punctures and you would have to be happy with that. It sure makes you appreciate the black stuff that we take for granted most times.

At the end of the last gravel section the support vehicle was waiting. There was enough food to feed an army, and again nobody went hungry. Once more Gordon had catered exceptionally. Louise had it all ready and the hungry cyclists descended like locusts. After their fill some bikes came off the racks for the trip to Tarcutta while a few bikes went on the racks after a very hard morning's ride.

Ricki and Leith stole a lead and very nearly were first to Tarcutta. But seeing it wasn't a race there were no prizes for places so they were winners anyway as they enjoyed some time to themselves cycling on a quiet country road. At Tarcutta, with a hard 90km under their tyres, some cyclists added their bikes to the rack as there was still 45km to go. The rest mounted their trusty cycles and headed westward arriving back in Wagga Wagga just before dark. Ron had put in an order for lights to be brought out but had to make a second telephone call to cancel these when it became evident he would be back before sundown.

The ride was a great experience. It would not have been possible without the preparation and generosity of the ride leader. Gordon left nothing to chance and catered for every need, not just the stomachs of the riders. The support vehicle driven by Louise, complete with trailer and bike racks, ensured that people could get a lift when necessary. Our collective thanks goes to Gordon and Louise for their efforts in providing a very enjoyable weekend for all.