

22-23 July 2005 – Bruce Hackett

On the weekend of 22nd July, eleven intrepid Bicycle Wagga Wagga cyclists and two local cyclists joined Jeff Ibbotson and members of Canberra's "Pedal Power" in the picturesque and historic town of Young for "Christmas in July". Both the Commercial Hotel and the Town House Motel seemed to be in the process of renovating. At the pub the bar remained open for most of the night and the locals took full advantage. But the landlord was apologetic and helpful and provided full breakfasts on both Saturday and Sunday.

Forty seven of us set out on the 80 kilometre loop through Murringo, Bendick Murrel and Wirrimah. After a frosty start the day became sunny and devoid of wind, providing glorious and invigorating cycling. There were opportunities to get to know some of the other riders, particularly Amanda, Debbie's teacher friend, and Kevin and his children on their "tripalong", all of whom are foundation members of the recently formed Cootamundra BUG. There was also Helen on her two wheeled recumbent, and Ken and Barbara on their tandem, doing their first serious ride. The weekend also provided an opportunity for Jane to test run her new Bike Friday and to report that she found it "exhilarating"! There were the usual grumbles about hills ("They seem to be everywhere!"), but the worst hill was the one we did not need to climb after missing the turn into the lunch stop. Lunch was at Sunnyside Rose Gardens, a quaint little property with facilities resembling Junee's Lavender Farm. As well as providing a delicious lunch, the proprietor recited bush poetry, giving us his version of (inevitably) "Mulga Bill's Bicycle" and other lesser-known pieces. A highlight of the afternoon ride was a glimpse from the road of "Iandra Castle", a huge house complete with towers and buttresses, which must be Young's best-kept secret.

Dinner at the pub that evening complete with Santa decorations and bonbons was definitely a feature of the weekend. The Sunday ride to Harden was no less spectacular, including a visit to Shepherd's Moon Vineyard, where the three excited children as well as the proprietor gave us a hearty welcome at the farm gate, and where the Shiraz costs \$20 per bottle at the Cellar Door! Then it was on to the Terracotta Restaurant at Murrumburrah for lunch and more bush poetry.

Most of the Pedal Power people returned to Canberra direct from Murrumburrah, so the ride back to Young into a headwind proved something of an anti-climax, but Kerrie, Amanda and Danny enjoyed taking turns to lead us home. Many of the Canberra people were on the Laurel Hill trip in 2004, and we are all looking forward to renewing acquaintances at Laurel Hill in 2005.