

Bicycle Wagga Wagga – Ride Report

Geoff & Jan's Ganmain Getaway

01-02 March 2008 – Ray Stenhouse

Geoff and Jan Marks have done it before. They have organised the Ganmain Getaway although in previous years it may have been named differently. For example, it has been known as the Big Ride Warm Up. Well, this year, there's no Big Ride to warm up for. There is a Great Escapade, but for one reason or another, very few locals have signed up for this multi-day cycling adventure so the ride this year has just been known as the Ganmain Getway.

As experienced ride organisers Mr and Mrs Marks well know that weather can play a huge part in how much fun people have. So Mr Marks put in his order for good riding weather and accompanied his order with a lot of brownie points. As most people that know Mr Marks know, it takes him a long time to accumulate brownie points, however the amount of brownie points Geoff included must have been enough because the weather supplied for the weekend was pretty much what he had ordered. There was a slight headwind on Sunday morning but overall you couldn't have asked for much better.

On Saturday morning, at the appointed time, cyclists started descending upon the appointed starting place, Wagga Beach. There was a previous appointed time where those that were taking part in both days of riding had gathered to load their bags, tents and sleeping gear into the trailer. But the time for riding was fast approaching and the eager cyclists readied themselves for the imminent departure.

The nearly 30 cyclists departing from the Beach adjusted seat heights, checked tyre pressures, and listened intently as Geoff delivered his briefing. Another two cyclists would join the group out along the Old Narrandera Road but for now Geoff explained the route to be taken to exit the city and head westward to Currawarna for lunch. With all of the formalities out of the way it was time to mount the trusty bicycles and get under way.

The exit from the Beach was uneventful but as always seems to be the case in Johnson Street at each of the two sets of traffic lights the cyclists were presented initially with the colour red. As the riders funnelled into one lane a cyclist, who shall remain unnamed for fear of further embarrassment, found his feet trapped in the cleats with the result that he found himself laying astride his bicycle on the road surface. The good thing was that he did not hurt himself and was able to disentangle himself, regain the vertical stance and continued the ride as if nothing had happened.

The route took the riders along Johnson Street, a right turn into Trail, another right at the end of Trail into Travers, then across the Wiradjuri Bridge into North Wagga. At this point one of the more seasoned cyclists, a nice way of indicating a rider of advanced years, thought he'd lighten his load and jettisoned his tool kit. One of the trailing riders noticed this flagrant attempt to reduce his handicap and advised this senior rider that his indiscretion had been observed. Having lost any advantage the rider retraced his route to retrieve the tool kit which placed him well and truly at the rear of the field.

Fortunately for the senior rider and his fellow companions at the tail of the field did not have a long chase. The rest of the group had stopped on the Old Narrandera Road near Pine Gully Road to allow the dispersed group to regather before heading off with Malebo Hill in their sights. This is where the two other riders joined the throng too.

Several groups formed as riders found a pace they were comfortable with and these groups worked well together. That is, until they encountered Malebo. As uphills tend to do the groups splintered as each rider attacked the climb in their own individual way. At the top the riders gathered once again until the final rider rolled in.

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After a brief spell, with Euberta the next locality to be visited, the cyclists pointed their mounts downhill. Again the large contingent disintegrated into small bunches as riders settled into a comfortable pace. The day was beautiful, and riding was pleasant to say the least, and the kilometres seemed to quickly slip away under the spinning wheels.

Euberta came and went, then Millwood and before the forward party preparing for the hungry hordes at Currawarna knew it, the hungry hordes were hovering around in anticipation of the fine lunch that has always been a feature of previous rides. In the past there's been hot dogs but this year homemade soup was on the menu. Despite the day not being cool the soup went down a treat. The soup was followed by sandwiches and then some sweet things which went down very well too. Some home made sausage rolls arrived a little later than expected, a result of some reptilian activity at the bakehouse. Despite the lateness of the delivery there was none to be found shortly afterwards.

With lunch consumed two of the fold headed back to Wagga. Some tag teaming was completed, some others unloaded their bikes, and the riders departed heading out along the Old Narrandera Road again. They ignored the road to the right with the sign advising Ganmain lay just 23km away and they pushed their pedals down pushing towards Roping Pole Road. There they would turn right and make their way to the Ganmain Sports Club.

Along the way some of the novices experienced their first taste of riding in a peleton. The honka-hooter was brought into action as the signal for the leading cyclists to change. There was some complaints as the honka-hooter operator sometimes misjudged the timing as she was engrossed in her conversation. Other times, some members of the peleton thought it inappropriate to change the lead going up a hill but despite these misgivings the team rolled along with the kilometres quickly disappearing.

Progress was halted on occasion as there were calls to stop so that photos could be taken of the hairy panic (a grass seed) gathered in clumps in and along the fenceline. It is quite possible, too, that the photo calls were made to alleviate cramping but this may just be conjecture on the part of the author.

Along this section, one of the riders felt inclined to offer a helping hand to another. A slight miscalculation on the part of this generous soul resulted in his generosity being unrewarded as he lost balance and made contact with the ground. Some thought that this rider was only showing off anyway as the accident occurred within a very close distance of the front gate to the family farm. There was some skin off, some blood, but fortunately no serious harm.

At Ganmain those that had elected to stay for the evening picked their campsite carefully and erected their homes for the evening. Some of the day riders were pleased to park their bikes and put their feet up and watch the activity. Other day riders had their hearts set on more kilometres and commenced their return journey via Coolamon. They missed out on the fine spread of snacks prepared by Mrs Marks and her band of happy helpers. One of the happy helpers was happy to help but wasn't happy if someone was to take their piece of pineapple. Fair enough too!

The showers were appealing until it was discovered that an electrical fault earlier in the week had decommissioned the hot water service. While the Sports Club officials set about in an effort to rectify this situation the cyclists enjoyed the opportunity to sit, relax and enjoy the company of others while demolishing the prepared snack. Others decided to remount the bikes and take in some of the more unusual sights that Ganmain has to offer. Other still found the call of the pristine waters of the swimming pool irresistible.

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After the touring and the swimming had been completed by the tourists and the swimmers everyone gathered back at the Sports Club with thoughts of appeasing the rumbling stomachs. Cycling, touring or swimming can be hunger causing activities it seems. One lot of campers decided that their first choice of campsite may not have been that ideal given its proximity to the Locker Room door. Thoughts of the banging of the door through the wee hours causing sleeplessness created some anxiety so their tent became a caravan and was relocated to a seemingly more desirable site away from this potential source of irritation.

The hot water service remained in a state of inoperability despite the best efforts of the Club officials. This meant that a lot of water was saved as the showers were very brief but the good thing is that everyone felt refreshed and invigorated afterwards.

By now the worms were well and truly biting despite the fact that all of the afternoon snacks had been demolished. When Geoff advised that it was time to order the sound of stampeding feet was quite loud. The main meals were ordered and after suitable table arrangements were made, the group sat and awaited the arrival of their selections.

As quick as the chef could produce the meals these were delivered to the appropriate person. Some of the meals looked similar and in fact one of the wait staff used an inventive method to determine exactly what lay beneath the salad and chips that covered the main meal. All of the meals were devoured with gusto and thoughts soon turned to dessert. One of our number was shocked to be told that he didn't need to order a tart as his dessert as there were already enough tarts on the table. Left a little confused by the response to his request this person decided he didn't need any dessert anyway. This was his loss however, as the tart was very nice, very nice indeed.

Before long those that needed to return home due to commitments the following day found that their partners (complete with parent) or produce had arrived to whisk them away. Because they were having such a good time they didn't want to leave straight away so the drivers were made to wait until such time as the day trippers were ready to leave.

Once the club had cleared of the day trippers and their entourages a few of the campers decided to try their luck in the Club. Most generously donated their stake to the Club however there were others that left the Club with a smile on their face with their winnings rattling away in their pockets.

The campers all eventually found their way to their tents, while the lone hotel patron departed for his comfortable lodgings. Overnight the wind came up quite strongly causing some to wake from their sleep or prevented some from gaining sleep at all. Others, their tent having been relocated to a purportedly quieter location, tossed and turned counting the seconds that elapsed between one heat bank turning off before another started.

With the rising of the sun the campers slowly crawled out of the confines of their canvas homes to greet the day. Those that had not slept, or had slept little, greeted the morning with a little less enthusiasm than did those that had managed a good night's slumber. However, soon the sizzling sounds and the sweet aroma of food cooking had all feeling much happier about their lot in life. I'm not sure if I've mentioned this previously in this report or not but one of the fabulous aspects of a ride organised by Mr and Mrs Marks is that the food is fantastic. Breakfast met the high expectations of the group as they all thought of the day's cycling ahead of them, taking particular note that they would initially face a headwind, and accordingly needed to ensure they had adequate fuel on board.

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With breakfast behind us those that camped decamped. Mr Marks discovered his wallet in the nick of time just as the handy helpers tried to roll his tent up to stow away in the trailer. Camp was broken fairly quickly and the riders busied themselves once more with preparing themselves and their bikes for the journey ahead. Some last minute tyre inflation and they were on their way heading towards Coolamon.

The cyclists quickly assessed that the best way to get to Coolamon into the headwind was to work together as a group. Just past Brushwood a loud popping sound heralded the immediate departure of the air from the rear tyre of one of the contingent, funnily enough, one of the participants of the upcoming Great Escapade. This ride has previously acted as a test event of these participants so that they could fine tune themselves, their bikes and their camping equipment and this had worked this time. The tyre that suffered this severe bout of depression had certainly seen better days and would see no more. Fortunately for the tyre owner there was support vehicle on hand and while his bike was ceremoniously loaded on the bike rack another of the group rang ahead contacting Geoff at Coolamon and arranging a rendezvous so that some slick tyre changing could be completed allowing the training cyclist to continue riding.

Once in Coolamon the riders initially turned to head towards Wagga Wagga before then changing direction to head out the Millwood Road. Going this way adds about 10km to the journey but with the change of direction the wind was now assisting the riders. This assisted them to make short work of the 25km to the Old Narrandera Road where morning tea was had. Have I mentioned before that the food is good on rides organised by the Markses? Well, the morning tea hit the spot and with a few people trading places giving up the car seat for the bike seat the group departed headed towards Wagga along the Old Narrandera Road.

Once more the group gathered at the top of Malebo Hill before descending at great speed to complete the final kilometres into town. By various routes the cyclists made their way to complete the ride at the home of the Markses. Bikes were loaded, camping gear was collected and the participants departed for homes after expressing their thanks to Geoff and Jan for organising another wonderful weekend of cycling and socialising.

If you didn't make it this year, then there's always next year. As soon as the date is fixed block out the weekend. If you don't you will miss out on one of the very special weekends on the calendar and you wouldn't want that now would you?

These cyclists enjoyed the Ganmain Getaway with Geoff and Jan:

Ron Addison	Bruce Golding	Aamon Mulchay
Cheryl Armstrong	Bruce Hackett	Hilton Mulchay
Eric "Lance" Armstrong	Wendy Hodge	Raelee Mulchay
Steve Brown	Greg Hodges	Heather Pearce
Brendan Carroll	Janet Hume	Reg Pearce
Johno Carroll	Alex Inch	Jenny Powell
Belinda Cheyney	Ross Inch	Phil Powell
Gary Cheyney	Leslie Johanson	Lisa Scott
John Fewson	John Lehmann	Ray Stenhouse
Edwina Funnell	Marg Loiterman	Charlie Westerman
Paul Funnell	Ray Loiterman	
David Glastonbury	Jeff Macauley	
Lisa Glastonbury	Peter Makin	