

Bicycle Wagga Wagga – Ride Report

Cycling Hits and Memories

A TRIP TO THE HIGH COUNTRY – 19 June 2003 – David Glastonbury



The Author on his Bike Friday

Though I am a keen cyclist, I always look forward to reports of early season snow falls and the opportunity to head for the mountains and my favourite cross country ski location of Cabramurra.

Cabramurra is a unique alpine village promoted as “the highest township in Australia” and is only two hours drive from Wagga Wagga.

My early season interest in cross country skiing has been encouraged this year by the prospect of my planned departure in July this year for an extended cycle tour of Scotland, northern England and the Pyrenees and Alps of France.

Added enthusiasm has been provided by Bicycle Wagga Wagga member Gordon Moore’s newly discovered interest in cross country skiing as part of a personal fitness programme. Gordon has previously enjoyed many years of horseback trail riding in the northern areas of the expansive Kosciuszko National Park and skiing offers the opportunity to revisit and experience these areas with their winter snow cover.

Thus Gordon and I headed off on Thursday 19 June for my first cross country ski of the season and Gordon’s first ever experience of the sport. Our car trip took us through the mountain foothill village of Tumbarumba, along the Tooma Road to the turn off to the Elliott Way.

I have recently enjoyed cycling this road from Tumbarumba to Tooma and Tintalra with a group of cyclist from Albury and Wagga Wagga and led by master tour organiser, Peter Harper. Peter really enjoys extracting cycling effort as much as he enjoys extracting molars!

This cycle route passes through some spectacular countryside with panoramic views towards the high mountains ranges and Kosciuszko. The Tooma Valley is always lush with its rolling grasslands and grazing cattle herds.

After leaving the Murrumbidgee catchment the road begins its long and interesting descent into the upper Murray River valley, arguably some of the prettiest countryside within a couple of hours drive from Wagga Wagga.

The Tooma Road also passes the most interesting and historic Henry Angel Track Head about 9km from Tumbarumba. This introduces a most popular mountain bike circuit with members of Bicycle Wagga Wagga.

This is a most convenient access point for the Mt Garland circuit back to Tumbarumba. I have ridden this trail on a couple of occasions and it follows the Burra Creek along numerous reminders of early mining days with water races, sluice mining, creek bank reconstruction and rock tunnels. The trail then follows the Tumbarumba Creek with single track, steep descents and rocky creek crossings providing plenty of excitement as well as spectacular views of the seasonally snow capped Snowy Mountain Range.

The road to the snow at Cabramurra then continues along the Elliott Way through mountain forest country. This road provides access to further interesting opportunities for mountain bikes.

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Whilst I have not yet explored these routes along the Powerline Road, the track to the North West is reputed to be interesting and challenging. Gordon has ridden the South track on horseback on many occasions and this trail eventually leads to Round Mountain off the Cabramurra – Khancoban road.

The Elliott Way then reaches Sue City on the upper reaches of the Talbingo Reservoir.

Cyclists from Wagga Bidgee Canoe Club have frequently used Sue City as a base camp to access and enjoy the steep downhill sections on both the Cabramurra and Tumbarumba approaches to Sue City.

We usually car shuffle our cycles to the top of the mountain and then enjoy the exhilarating downhill to the fresh waters of the Tumut River. The fitter and keener may also attempt the cycle to the top before speeding off downhill.

Gordon and I then continued our drive up the mountain to the junction of the Kiandra – Tumbarumba – Cabramurra roads. Our destination the cross country ski plateau and marked trails at Cabramurra, our enthusiasm heightened by our first glimpse of snow.

This road junction brought back further memories of interesting and challenging cycling trips, In particular the experience of the steep descent from the Kiandra Road into Ravine on Talbingo Reservoir.

The most recent time that we attempted this descent, one of our party had a serious fall on the loose gravel and sustained considerable abrasion. To make matters worse it began to rain in torrents and I had to walk my mountain bike for over one hour up hill in mud, slush and bitterly cold driving winds.

We then camped the night at Sue City in teaming rain and wind. This did not prevent one of our party actually cooking a cake in her Trangia stove!



The learner skier at Falls Creek 3 weeks later.

The Ravine Road links up with the access from the Snowy Mountains Highway but would probably require a camp out to complete the circuit or alternatively a car pick up could be arranged. Never the less it is a most interesting mountain bike circuit.

Snow at last! A good cover under the stark sentinels of the burnt out Alpine Ash and Snow Gums around Cabramurra.

Gordon and I headed for the cross-country ski area and day shelter adjacent to the Kings Cross Road. The snow was fantastic, so early in the season, with a hard base providing excellent conditions for Gordon to learn the technique of diagonal striding. He certainly looked the part in his newly acquired stretch snow skin tights!

The unsealed Kings Cross Road, closed in winter by snow, offers a further excellent summer cycle opportunity along the plateau to Mt Selwyn and beyond.

We have on many occasions ridden this formed access road to Mount Selwyn and then continued along the Tabletop fire trail to 4

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Mile Hut and Mount Tabletop, again a fantastic cross-country ski trip in the winter.

We are indeed fortunate to have such excellent locations for road and mountain cycling so close to Wagga Wagga with incredible cross-country skiing in the winter months.

I'm sure that Gordon will be a regular visitor over the next couple of months as he sheds those kilograms for his cycle to Queensland and also hones his technique on skinny skis.

Unfortunately I will miss most of the ski season, but skiing in November has happened in the past. Maybe I can organise the deferred cycle weekend at Cabramurra soon after my return and put the Bike Friday away and get out the mountain bike!