



April 2005

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## Ramblings from El Presidente

As the days grow shorter I look back and see what a great summer of cycling we have had. The weather has been great for cycling (if not for the farmers) and we have enjoyed the Alpine Classic, trips to Marrar, the RTA Big Ride, and Pleasant Hills and around our own Wagga Wagga at Easter. Still to come before the depths of winter are ANZAC weekend at Albury and our Mystery May Tour.

Thanks to all those who helped make the rides happen and to all those who participated. The group from Shoalhaven BUG, and others, really enjoyed the Easter rides and highlighted what the Riverina has to offer for cyclists. It's too easy to take it for granted when we live here!

There have been lots of new members lately and we welcome them to our BUG. As always the rides can only happen as members help to plan and run them. If you have an idea or would like to help make rides happen then let me know and I will show you how you can contribute.

Cyclists are on the move in the Riverina with groups working on forming new BUGS at Leeton, Albury and Cootamundra. We look forward to riding with these groups in the future and wish them well as they get going. BNSW and BWW will be running a Ride Leaders' Workshop on April 16 and people from all these groups will be participating. We need to lead our communities in enjoying the advantages of cycling for fun, our health and the environment.

As the darker hours of winter press in don't forget to check your lights, dust off the reflective clothes and Be Smart, Be Safe, Be Seen!

See you on the road.

*Greg Fell*

## Ride Leaders' Workshop

As indicated in the Ramblings from El Presidente above there will be a Ride Leaders' Workshop held in Wagga Wagga on **April 16<sup>th</sup>**. Bicycle NSW is running the workshop and this is the first to be conducted outside Sydney.

The places are limited however if there is sufficient numbers then there may be a second workshop run.

Participants will be given information on how to plan, promote and run rides. The aim is to increase the number of skilled recreational ride leaders. By doing so BNSW wants to achieve better organised rides which will lead to more satisfaction for participants and

the leaders too. By having better planned rides there will be improved safety for those people on the ride with a reduced level of risk for everyone involved.

If you're not already signed on as a workshop participant then you can still be assist on the day. As part of the workshop participants will be required to lead a ride.

So we need as many volunteers as possible to come along and do nothing more than go for a ride. You're guaranteed a good time and it will be a great opportunity to meet a few people too. Come on, you know you want to.

Graeme Buchan is the local contact for the workshop. Please contact **Graeme Buchan** on **6922 6806** if you are able to help.

## RTA Big Ride: Second Time Around by Bruce Hackett

Last year I subtitled my Big Ride article “A Novice in Adventure Land”, and recalled that one of the many things I had learned was how to pitch a tent. For the 2005 ride I resolved to restrict myself to one travel bag, which was subject to a weight limit of fourteen kilograms. This meant acquiring a smaller, lighter tent and restricting my other luggage to essential items. By certain devious means I managed to get my overweight bag through the checkpoint, but then had to lump it on to the luggage truck on each of the next nine days, and have decided that perhaps there is some merit in the “two bag” concept after all.

There were eighteen of us on the bus which set out from Wagga on a fine, sunny afternoon. After an uneventful trip we reached Jindabyne in daylight to face a not unusual confrontation with the camp manager about bringing the bus on to the oval. But eventually we unloaded, erected our tents in record time, and set off to enjoy the delights of the mountain town. It was too late and too cold for a swim in the lake but dinner at one of the many local pubs proved more than adequate compensation. Next morning we were bussed up to Charlotte Pass where we mounted our bicycles and assembled for the massed start from near the Kosciusko Summit. The ride down the mountain was sheer bliss, especially the twelve-kilometre descent from Rennix Gap to the Thredbo River, and the



“I’m glad this ride is all downhill Sue” comments Geoff.

spectacular views of the lake as we approached Jindabyne township.

The ride from Jindabyne to Dalgety on Day 2 was notable for the summer grass and snow gums which dotted the hillsides. At the disused Rocky Plains School we met up with some of John’s relatives who live locally. In Dalgety we viewed some antique cars and (I’m told) drank the pub dry, before retiring to our tents for the first of two rainy nights on this ride.

The light rain continued as we crossed the treeless Monaro Plains on Day 3 to “Spring Well”, the 100-year-old homestead. The ladies of the Cooma Hospital Auxiliary had provided a sumptuous array of scones and cakes and it was a bit of a shame that the rain prevented the garden setting being enjoyed at its best. However, John did get some spectacular photos of the front of the house. The ride into Bredbo was along the Monaro Highway with some spectacular views of the Upper Murrumbidgee.

Continuing along the Monaro Highway to Queanbeyan on Day 4, the country became more timbered and undulating. A highlight of the day was the morning-tea stop at Michelago School, where the thirty-eight children and their parents provided a momentous feast, and one of our cycling families enacted a spectacular circus display on its three man tandem.

The rest day in Queanbeyan provided a welcome respite and for some a chance to go hot air ballooning or to visit the national capital. It was also an opportunity to renew our acquaintance with Canberra’s “Pedal Power”, which organised cycle tours of the city and around the Lake.

Highlights of the “Teams Day” ride to Gunning were the lunch stop at Dick Smith’s “Bowylie”, with its stone-walled garden and narrow gauge railway running from the airstrip to the house, and the historic village of Gundaroo, made famous by Mike Hayes and his “Prickle Farm”.

I'm afraid I found it all a bit bizarre.

The 109-kilometre ride from Gunning to Marulan proved something of a challenge. Some "team" members actually had the temerity to suggest that I needed lower gears on my road bike, and although I admit I struggled a bit on the Bungonia Road, I don't remember walking any hills. But we were all glad to finally reach the lights of Marulan.

The next day the 82-kilometre ride to Robertson was a breeze. Unfortunately the day was shrouded in fog, which prevented us from enjoying the lush green beauty of the southern highland towns. We had our second rainy night in Robertson and there was some official apprehension about the ride down the mountain the next day. The Jamberoo Pass road was closed to all but local traffic and cyclists, and proved scary and hazardous – real Mulga Bill territory. But we all made it safely to the bottom and the massed ride into the streets of Kiama amid cheering crowds lining the streets made it all worthwhile and reminded one of the Russian Army's triumphal entry into Berlin! Well, perhaps not quite!

The 2006 ride is from Holbrook to Binalong, via Tumbarumba and Gundagai. I think I am still recuperating from the 2005 ride, and so am undecided about next year. But this year the oldest rider was in his eighties, so I guess there is hope for me yet.

**Editor's Note:** As Bruce indicates next year's RTA Big Ride is in our back yard. It starts on February 25<sup>th</sup> and finishes on March 5<sup>th</sup>. Be there!

## Easter Rides

In contrast to the previous two years, this year's Easter bike rides were well supported by a large contingent of 'out of town' cyclists. Friday's opening ride was a 40 km loop around Shepherds Siding. Cyclists congregated at Wagga Beach in time for the 1.30 pm start. Some of the Shoalhaven riders reported already encountering the nasty catheads prevalent at this time of the year. A last minute puncture delayed the start for a few minutes and deterred some of the mountain bikers from going with Paul Johanson who ended up with a small group of four.

The ride out to Shepherds Siding via North Wagga, Cartwright's Hill and Byrnes Road was assisted by strong tail winds. Conversely, the ride back to town along the Olympic Highway was hampered by strong head winds. Still, the cycling was very enjoyable as the weather was ideal – sunny but not hot. As was the case last year, afternoon tea was at Ray and Lyn's and consisted of three different types of cake, biscuits and plunger coffee supplied by Graeme and Jane Buchan from Wagga Catering Equipment.

Unfortunately Ben and Nicholas were unable to ride today as the chain on Ben's bike broke on the way out of the car park. This meant that the ride had a last minute change from being unsupported to supported! Not that this was needed though with all thirty-two cyclists completing the course in good time.

Saturday's 62 km ride was to Ladysmith via Gregadoo Hill and back via the Sturt Highway,

Elizabeth Avenue and Inglewood Road. The weather was perfect for cycling with not enough wind to make much difference. Leila met the group not far from the top of Gregadoo Hill with some welcome refreshments. It wasn't too far from there into Ladysmith where the cyclists were able to enjoy morning tea, or an early lunch, from the store.

There were a few hiccups on the return journey including a second broken chain. The cyclists all seemed to enjoy today's ride with many positive comments being passed about the route. A small group congregated at Scribbles for afternoon tea.

Thirty-seven cyclists participated in today's road ride while nine chose to accompany Paul for another mountain bike adventure. Reports indicated that they had a wonderful time despite experiencing approximately thirteen punctures. Luckily Paul was well prepared with plenty of extra tubes!

Saturday night's dinner took place at Golden Season, a family restaurant in the centre of Wagga Wagga. Thirty-five adults and three children had a very social time. There was much discussion about cycling and some plans were made for more collaboration between BUGS in the future. Tom was surprised with a cake and an enthusiastic rendition of Happy Birthday.

The format for Easter Sunday's rides was different from what has been done in previous years. Two separate road rides were on offer. The first being a 46 km undulating ride out to Downside and back; the second being a 33 km flat return ride to the Wagga Winery.

Again, conditions for cycling were pretty close to perfect with just a slight breeze making things interesting. Nineteen cyclists chose to do the Downside Discovery route which left Wagga Beach at 9 am. Despite the countryside looking dry, participants enjoyed the great views back towards Wagga.

Promises of a downhill run into town proved false and may have left a few people feeling rather annoyed (including the person who made the promise as it was an honest mistake)!

Ten cyclists chose to go mountain biking with Paul, also departing from Wagga Beach at 9 am. This time he took them around Lake Albert and back over Willan's Hill via the Botanic Gardens for a ride on the miniature railway. Both rides were back at Scribbles for a smorgasbord lunch just after midday.

The afternoon ride left the Beach at 2pm with thirty-five participants. It didn't take long to cycle to the Winery and many out of town riders chose to go in for a tasting. The return ride wasn't as smooth with a few punctures and one cyclist needing a lift as he didn't have any spare tubes. Afternoon tea was enjoyed at Scribbles with some cyclists finishing off their lunch with sweets.

The final road ride of this year's Easter programme was a loop around the outskirts of Wagga. Thirty-two cyclists chose to do this route, while Paul's group of mountain bikers totalled six. Two Shoalhaven cyclists had to pull out at the last minute as they'd lost their dog. Luckily this story has a happy ending as

they found their dog asleep on their bed under the covers! The road ride was a very pleasant affair. Cyclists had a break at Lake Albert for the final regroup before heading into town where Leila had prepared a feast for lunch which included sausage sandwiches, cans of drink and slice for dessert.

Paul's group joined us a little later for lunch. He obviously had been a very attentive guide as he was able to present a range of awards to all the mountain bikers that had accompanied him over the weekend. They seemed very appreciative of his hospitality. His involvement in the Easter Program was a last minute arrangement as he'd been unsure of his family commitments. The inclusion of his mountain bike rides was a real asset to the weekend as it allowed the visiting cyclists to indulge in their passion. It would be good to think this will become a regular extension of the Easter rides.

Just over sixty cyclists participated in the weekend's activities of which one third were from out of town and two were from overseas (currently studying in Wagga). It was a highly successful four days of cycling due to wonderful weather, good organisation, great visitors, lots of helpful Bicycle Wagga Wagga members and Leila, as always, there to look after us and our stomachs.

Although we don't want to finish up on a negative note, Ernie did ask about the *Complaints Department* - Too many catheads leading to too many punctures, mostly suffered by the out of town cyclists. Sorry about

this. We need more rain to soften them up. Please send some of yours our way!

## Marrar and Pleasant Hills

Geoff Marks organised a ride to Marrar in February as a warm-up for the RTA Big Ride. This gave an opportunity to test the legs, the bikes and the camping gear.

After the RTA Big Ride Geoff organised the return to Pleasant Hills trip. Despite the heat, headwinds and hills everyone had a great time.

A feature of this ride was the lunch prepared for us at Henty by Jan Whitlock and company. A veritable feast in the Whitlock's garden was extremely welcome. Thanks Jan and company.

Of course neither of these events would have taken place if Geoff hadn't done his bit. Thanks Geoff for another couple of great weekends with great cycling, great company, and great food. And our thanks goes to Jan Marks too. The breakfast at Marrar was superb.

## ANZAC Weekend 23<sup>rd</sup> / 24<sup>th</sup> / 25<sup>th</sup> April

Some rides are being run out of Albury on the ANZAC long weekend. There's plenty to do besides riding. Contact **Greg Fell** on **6922 3474** for details.

## Mystery May Tour

Where? When? It's still a mystery. Please contact **Graeme Buchan** on **6922 6806** for details.

**Safe cycling!**