

# WOBBLY WHEELS

Darebin BUG Mid-week Riders' Blog



## O'KEEFE RAIL TRAIL 1 FEBRUARY

A first for a Darebin BUG ride. Prior to setting off Alan Garbutt asked if everybody was Ok with him filming the ride. Alan has cameras mounted to the front and rear of his bike. Morning tea was at the first table on the trail about 8km from Heathcote. As we continued to lunch, we left the forest area and entered the farmland section where the numerous cattle grids were encountered. As we progressed riders became more confident riding over the grids.

Lunch in the park at Axedale was accompanied by the sound of the lawn being mowed but fortunately it was not too loud.



On the return journey stops were made at the new interpretive signs, which have been installed. At one of the signs it was discovered that Sue had a namesake in the trail history.

"O'Keefe owned his own locomotive named Sue. He used Sue to help construct the line and ferry himself and others between Bendigo and Heathcote. "

Everyone arrived safely back at Heathcote and hastily loaded the bike back in the cars in anticipation of afternoon tea at Gaffney's Bakery. Unfortunately, we were disappointed. The bakery closes at 4pm and we arrived about 10 minutes late.

Link to YouTube video produced by Alan Garbutt. Thanks Alan

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QRNZoyD--HU>

Ian

## THE MEN BEHIND THE LINE



The Bendigo Heathcote section of the line became a reality because of the determination of two key local men Alexander O'Keefe and Naphthali Ingham.

Andrew O'Keefe (Sixth on the right) arrived in Australia from Ireland in 1854

with his family at the Age of 12 and they moved to Bendigo in 1855. He learnt how to build railways after working with his father on public works contracts with his first railway contract being the Bendigo Heathcote section of the line construction. He also had considerable land holdings in the area.

Napthali Ingham was the owner of the bluestone quarry in Axedale. He was one of the first to suggest a train line was needed and successfully lobbied Sandhurst City Council. Ingham saw the many advantages rail would bring to the district by servicing the industry in the area.



#### IT'S A FACT

- 1) O'Keefe owned his own locomotive named Sue. He used Sue to help construct the line and ferry himself and others between Bendigo and Heathcote.
- 2) You can still see stone from Ingham's quarry in Axedale's kerb and channel.

#### BLOOD ON THE TRACKS

This lovely spot is known locally as Sportsman Hill after the long gone Sportsman's Arms Hotel. While it was a popular spot for scenic views it was also the site of a revolt against the line's builder

Andrew O'Keefe. In 1888 during the construction of the line, unidentified people placed a large log over the tracks at this site in an effort to sabotage his locomotive. The culprits were never found but it could have been any number of people who had a beef with the project. At the time the lines workers were striking for higher wages and local landowners were angry about not being adequately compensated for the land forcibly acquired for the line. There were further incidences of sabotage against Andrew O'Keefe, which culminated in a shooting in Bendigo later that year where he received minor injuries.



#### THE LAKE THAT SUNK THE RAIL!

The decision to dam the Campaspe and Coliban rivers to build Lake Eppalock, as a water supply to farms and towns in the north of Victoria confirmed the end of the line. Construction of the current Lake Eppalock began in 1961 and it was officially opened in April 1964

Lake Eppalock is the seventh largest Lake in Victoria, covers over 3,000 hectares and holds more than 300,000 megalitres of water when full.

You can still see where the railway was even when the lake is at a high or low level Nowadays the lake is also a tourist

attraction in its own right and a major destination for water recreational pursuits, attracting thousands of people year round.



### THE END OF THE LINE

The Bendigo-Heathcote section of the line was in use from 1888 to 1958. The last train to run on the line was a goods train drawn by a diesel electric "T" class locomotive. The line closed on December 3, 1958 following a decline in service demand, severe maintenance neglect on the line itself and the construction of Lake Eppalock. By 1962, the Bendigo-Heathcote section of the line had mostly been dismantled.

However the service between Heathcote and Wallan continued into the 1960s following opposition by the community to the threat of its closure. The last goods service was run in November 1968.

When the section of the O'Keefe Rail Trail from Axedale to Heathcote was officially opened in 2015, it completed the O'Keefe Rail Trail from Bendigo to Heathcote making the trail a total of 49 kilometres in length.

### MARIBYRNONG TRAIL, 3 FEBRUARY

Eight riders Colin, Roger, George, Sue, James, Ian, me (original Andrew) and new Andrew set off at 9:00. The weather was cool, very unusual for the previous couple of weeks, we even had a little rain. We headed along Merri Pde and onto the Capital City Trail. We then had an uneventful ride past the zoo and onto the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail to Footscray Road.

We crossed Footscray Road and made our way to the river before turning left and riding along Newquay Promenade, reaching the Capital City Trail we turned right and made our way to Docklands Park for morning tea.

After morning tea we rejoined the Capital City Trail, heading back towards Footscray Road. Along Footscray Road there seemed to be much more activity at the container terminal than I had seen recently and a lot of progress with the veloway being built above the median strip. Turning on to the Maribyrnong Trail, there was a bit of detouring needed to get around the boardwalk being rebuilt in front of the Footscray Art Centre. Following the Maribyrnong Trail we made our way past Footscray Park and Pipemakers Park to Coulson Gardens for lunch.







*James did enjoy the play equipment.*

After lunch we headed upstream, before crossing the river at the Afton Street footbridge we stopped at the historic Dale Stables. We had a very interesting talk with George about his memories of life at a time when there were still horse drawn vehicles used in daily life.



For instance, he remembered bread and milk being delivered by horse and cart, being taken by horse and jinker from his home in Moonee Ponds to Racecourse Road Flemington and collecting horse manure in a cart attached to the back of his bicycle to sell to local home gardeners.

We continued along the eastern bank of the river before crossing the river again at the Maribyrnong Road bridge. This bridge now has a much wider footpath, making it much safer for riders and pedestrians. Continuing down the river we turned off the main trail to ride around Edgewater lake before rejoining the main path near Footscray Rowing Club. At the Stockyard Bridge we crossed the river and made our way to Kensington Station and onto the Moonee Ponds Trail via Belair, Smith and Stubbs Street. We followed the Moonee Ponds Trail to Flemington Bridge and on to the Inner Circle Trail before turning onto Merri Parade and arriving back at Westgarth.

Andrew

## DIAMOND CREEK 8 FEBRUARY

On a fine morning I rolled up to the starting position soon after 9 am to hear Roger call out as I meandered past the Westgarth Station. There was some confusion about the starting time since summer rides were due to start at 9am but this ride was scheduled to start by catching the 9.41 train from Westgarth to Eltham, a hangover to the later start times.

As time passed more riders rolled up but Mandy had a bit of a panic as her Myki card had expired due to lack of use, but with much help and advice from all the other riders she was eventually able to purchase a new one from the machine. So 9 intrepid riders boarded the 9.41 Hurstbridge train and others joined at various stations along the way to Eltham.

We soon alighted at Eltham and initially set off on the footpath to join the Diamond Creek bike trail then turned off towards Research to the start of the Aquaduct Trail. The traffic lights seemed to divide the group a number of times and then Nola stopped after her chain fell off, and we heard a whisper that Ian had left his bag on the train so he hot footed or fast pedaled with additional bike power back to Eltham station to try to find out about his bag. Luckily the train only had a few stations to Hurstbridge, then on its return journey Ian was able to retrieve his backpack from where he left it on the seat. Phew..

Morning tea was on the rocks about 1km along the aqueduct trail, where we admired a Dachshund of one of the local dog walkers. It was here that we received a text from Ian informing us of the good news about his bag, and that he had set out for Diamond Creek on the direct trail.

After one short sharp climb where everyone emerged at the top puffing, we had a bit on an information session about the Rohloff gear

system found on Andrew's bike while we caught our breath. If you are interested in hub gears here is a reference.

([www.rohloff.de/en/products/speedhub](http://www.rohloff.de/en/products/speedhub)).

We arrived at the new playground at Diamond Creek Regional Playspace around 12 o'clock and sat in the shade next to the old W class tram. The café is run by the Diamond Creek Rotary Club and social enterprise Araluen. A number of riders sampled the wares and liked their items.



After lunch we rode through the playground admiring the structures and wood carving before reaching Diamond Creek road then turned back south on the bike trail towards Eltham, where a number of riders decided to catch the train home.

The journey back toward Jika was a ride of attrition with riders departing at various points along the way so that only 3 riders made it back to Phil's bakery on High st so that Roger could enjoy his favourite chocolate milk with lots of cream on top, and Ian could hold onto his treasured backpack.

The ride was completed by about 3.30 and covered about 42km.

Ed

## BLACKBURN LAKE 10 FEBRUARY

The weather forecast was for the low 20s and overcast, a bit of a relief after some hot weather. Seven of us set off on our ride to Blackburn Lake – Roger, George, Allan G, Ian H, David, Pam and myself.

Mixing it up a bit the plan was to ride via the Capital City trail to Burnley, take the Gardiners Creek trail to Glen Iris and turn onto the Ferndale trail. A slightly rocky start though with two riders getting separated within the first half hour. I took my usual detour across Merri Creek to get to Dights Falls but lost the back of the pack in the process. I saw them disappearing off in the distance the other way. With a quick turnaround we caught up to Roger and Pam who had gotten to Dights Falls ahead of us.

With the group back together, we continued on past the Abbotsford Convent and back onto the Capital City trail. The path and the river were particularly quiet and peaceful as we rode along with just a few walkers and other cyclists.

The rest of the ride until morning tea was luckily uneventful. We turned onto the Gardiners Creek trail and then later onto the Ferndale Trail at Glen Iris. We stopped at Ferndale Park for our morning break. There were a few people already at two of the tables but very kindly some moved away when they saw the seven of us. We were able to spread out a bit over two tables.

After our break Pam left us when we got to the Anniversary trail. The remaining six of us turned south for a short hop to Ashburton station. Where we crossed the train line to ride through the back streets to link back into the Gardiners Creek trail. Some of the group recognised the detour from the past. I got it from Melways. It was sunny by the time we got to Blackburn

Lake around midday. We sat and had our lunch on the wide steps and large rocks at the back of the Visitors Centre.







On the way out of the park George and his bike had a small mishap with a grassy shrub but no harm done to either him or the plant. Leaving the lake, we went north to the railway line cycle path, turning off shortly to go across through to the Maroondah highway. Another Melways route took us through the backstreets to the Koonung Trail near Springvale Road.

Alan G left us at Bulleen Road before the rest of us turned off for the Chocolate shop, where we got two sets of free chocolates in a lucky mistake.

David left us then to ride through to Ivanhoe station. The rest of us rode back to the Main Yarra trail to Kew and turned off to go across the Chandler Highway bridge back to base.

Another good ride. Distance 54 km.

Report from Sue Hiscock

## HASTINGS 15 FEBRUARY

Thirteen DBUG members and guests met at the Jack Babington Reserve in Hastings for our annual, except for Covid, ride on the Mornington Peninsula, hosted by Mandy and Graham. Paul, Pam, Ralph and I stayed overnight at the Hall residence, while Sue, Roger and Ian S drove down on the day. Tim, Lee, Rod and Graham Broad made our number a lucky thirteen for a pleasant day's cycling.

Graham led off with Mandy on tail. We spotted a large group of Mothers with prams heading off for a social walk, plus people walking their dogs. We rode on the first boardwalk around the park and foreshore marina. Upon entering the Warringine Park and Bittern Coastal Wetlands Boardwalk we navigated a tricky gate that only let one person through at once. This boardwalk showcases the southern most mangroves in the world with plenty of birdlife and good views to French Island. Before too long we were at Jack's Beach, named after the Jack brothers who were fishermen there in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Graham pointed out the sunken submarine to our right that is used as a breakwater.



Morning tea was at Jack's Beach Reserve, where Mandy realised, she forgot their cups so no coffee for them. It pays to lock the toilet door if you don't want an intruder, but luckily dignity was left intact. We then rode on a combination of quiet roads and bike paths with slight hills to our lunch stop at the historic Coolart Homestead. There was plenty of shade under huge trees and many picnic tables to choose from. Although early, the ride had given us an appetite, so we ate lunch first, before a wander around the perimeter of the old house. Other groups were also enjoying the pleasant surroundings.



Graham led us on a walk to the nearby Somers beach, from where you could see Phillip Island in the distance. A few of the group stayed behind to relax and chat. Eventually it was time to regroup and return to Hastings, which took about an hour. A bakery in the main street was our welcome coffee venue for afternoon tea. Coffees, teas, iced coffees and iced chocolate, plus a couple of vanilla slices were gratefully consumed after an enjoyable day's cycling of about 37km.

The group individually thanked Graham and Mandy for their organisation of such a lovely ride.

Report by Nola



## **EPPING TO HURSTBRIDGE 17 FEBRUARY**

I changed trains at Clifton Hill on to the Mernda line and at Rushall, Roger, George, James and Alan got in. This was a few minutes earlier than the train time we had indicated in the Ride Program but Barbara was the only other rider who had indicated that they would join us and she duly got in at Reservoir. Seven riders was a good number for a Thursday.

We soon arrived at Epping and took advantage of the facilities before heading off.

We soon arrived at Turner's bakery in Mernda and secured a large outdoor table for coffee and cake. Barbara had indicated that she would only ride as far as morning tea and then return as she had not ridden much lately. However, she was keeping up strongly and the group encouraged her to continue which she did.

We negotiated the maze of Laurimar streets and found the exit though this seemed partially blocked. From there it was only a few minutes into the Yan Yean Reservoir park and up the steep rise to the look out. We had a pleasant lunch enjoying the view and were joined for a chat by a rider from Whittlesea.



After lunch we took the road to Arthur's Creek which was busier than we would have liked but the traffic decreased after Arthur's Creek. This section of the ride had pleasant downhill runs with a few uphill to balance. We arrived at David's house for afternoon tea to be enthusiastically greeted by resident greyhound Cirque.

Alan went off instead to try to ride the new trail to Wattle Glen but found it still fenced off. It is due to open in March.

Tea on the patio was pleasant though a little warm as the early cloud had dispersed. Remaining riders headed off to catch the 14.40 train. A pleasant 35 km ride.

David

## **WOODLANDS HISTORIC PARK 22 FEBRUARY**

Eleven keen riders set off from Westgarth at 9.00am with Colin leading and Roger as tail for the short ride to Newmarket Railway Station where a twelfth rider joined the group for the train trip to Broadmeadows.

After a small amount of confusion the group set off through Broadmeadows towards Broadmeadows Valley Park then south towards Jacana Reserve and on to the Moonee Ponds Creek trail for the ride to Woodlands Historic Park.

Morning tea was at Westmeadows Park. The ride to Woodlands Historic Park was interesting through some quite open country, beside a fenced off conservation area and through some challenging barriers at a fence line and other hindrance.

Along the way a small mob of Kangaroos was seen resting peacefully not far from the path. All riders arrived at the homestead where we enjoyed a relaxed lunch break in the shade of the old trees. As the trail into the homestead and the homestead itself are relatively close to Melbourne Airport there was much interest watching the planes coming in to land.



After lunch we made the journey back towards the Moonee Ponds Creek, stopping along the way for a photo opportunity looking towards the Airport.



The ride back along the trail was uneventful except for the leader having to be reined in because of his need for speed!

The group left the Moonee Ponds Creek trail at the Union Street crossing and we were guided to a nice café in Grantham Street for afternoon tea by Sue.

Finally it was time to head back to Westgarth with some riders peeling off as they got nearer to home or had other tasks to attend to.

Thankfully the weather was kind to us, not being too hot and not raining.

Another good ride with no accidents, injuries, punctures or major mechanical failures!

Total ride distance 53km (Strava) approximately.

Colin



## **DJERRING TRAIL 24 FEBRUARY**

Nine riders gathered at 9:00 am at the starting point. They were David, Roger, Ian H, Andrew, Pam Styles, Ed, Sue, Alan G and James. There was much interest in Ed's new e-bike. We headed off a short time later along Darebin Creek and under the Freeway to the Anniversary Trail. Most of us noticed that although the bike trails were quiet, there were more cars on the road. The weather was close to ideal. It was humid most of the time, broken up by cool breezes in the afternoon.

We stopped for morning tea at Frogs Hollow. Pam left us after morning tea. We crossed the Freeway at East Malvern Station and then it was through the urban forest to Hughesdale Station where we turned towards the city along the Djerring Trail. I noticed that the plants have grown a lot since this path was opened.

We soon left the Djerring Trail after Carnegie Station and headed south along Mimosa Road and Oakleigh Road, both of which are pleasant peaceful streets. Oakleigh is part of the Rosstown Rail Trail, we kept going west and decided to have lunch a little early at the EE Gunn Reserve near Ormond Station. After lunch Ed agreed to let a couple of riders take his new bike for a test ride. Ian was able to show Ed a couple of things about the gear change on the new bike.

After lunch we kept going west to the Elwood Canal where we picked up the first of the sea breezes,



There was a light tail wind as we headed along the beach towards Albert Park.

Inside the park there were many temporary buildings and stands in preparation for the Grand Prix. Apart from several extra vehicles in the park, we were able to travel the usual path along the west of the park and into Moray Street. David left us at Jolimont Station. Coffee was at the misleadingly named "South of Johnston" in Oxford Street. We all sat outside. It was very comfortable in the shade of a large umbrella. Roger, Sue, Alan, Andrew, and Ed left us then and it was only Ian left when I arrived back to Westgarth, a bit before 3 pm. About 50 km.

James

## SATURDAY RIDES

### 5 February

Forecast was for a clear day with a temperature of 26 deg. We had 7 starters included one visitor. Come start time, I made the clarion call and all headed off, except for me. I had had some tyre problems on recent rides and had swapped my Prima Comp tires for Schwalbe Marathons and in my carelessness, I hadn't secured my wheel properly in its drop-outs and it had dropped out. A bit of tinkering and I was on my way. I caught up in South Crescent. Two more riders joining us on the way, bringing the number to 9.

Through Darebin Parklands, we were soon onto the Donaldson Creek Trail, which is quite scenic, if somewhat brief. Through not very exciting suburbia until we reached Kingsbury Drive, where we discovered our visitor, had been riding on semi-flat tyres. A bit of pumping and I had them back to an acceptable pressure. A bit more suburbia and we arrived at the Macleod shops. Here we had our coffee break.

Feeling refreshed and nourished, we resumed our ride. Heading East we picked up the River Gum Walk Trail, a very pleasant ride, all the way to Warringal Parklands and the Banksia Street crossing. Having all succeeded to cross Banksia Street, it was onto the Main Yarra Trail. Up over the golf club hill, without too much trouble. Passed the Blind Dog Training and by the usual route, back to Rushall Station. Perfect weather, no disasters, a 31km distance, it had been a great ride.

### 12 February

A warmish day forecast at 29. deg. and no rain for our usual ride from Rushall Station to Port Melbourne and back. There was good turn up, with 12 starters at Rushall and 2 more at Royal Park.

Heading off the temperature was very pleasant and hadn't built up at all. A brief toilet stop at dockland and on to Caps for our morning coffee. At Caps a helicopter turned up in a cloud of dust, to give a group of rescuers "co-ordination" training. It was noticed that two of the controllers had in white lettering "drone pilot" on their black shirts and two mysterious large black boxes in the back of their 4 wheel drive. Here we were joined by 2 more riders and one rider departed.



Fully nourished, we headed back. Along the sea front, there was a strong cross wind that seemed to abate when we turned onto the Light Rail Trail. At the City we lost 2 riders, the rest rode back to Rushall with further incident.



### **19 February**

The forecast was for 24 deg., high UV and no rain. The ride would be the usual Rushall Station to Port Melbourne and return. We had 9 starters at Rushall, but 2 riders headed off early to find a comfort station. At Royal Park we were joined by 2 more riders, plus the 2 that had left earlier from the start, making 11 riders in all.

Off we headed on the Capital City Trail. It was one of those days where it was too hot with a jacket on and too cold with it off. Toilet stop at Docklands and off again down Lorimer Street. At Westgate Park some low life had celebrated his life by smashing bottles on the cycle path, so at the risk of damaging the native vegetation, we improvised brooms from low scrub and cleared a safe path for unwary fellow cyclists.



We were joined by one more rider at Caps and the coffes seemed more sociable than usual as with difficulty the riders were dragged away to resume the return journey. At the City we lost 2 riders and the rest rode back to Rushall without further incident.

### **26 February**

Once again our regular Saturday ride, Rushall Station to Port Melbourne, via Capital City Trail and return via MCG and Napier Street. Forecast 27 deg., no rain but high UV. On the morning it was coolish and patchy clouds.

At start time we headed off with 11 riders including one visitor. All was fine until we reached Lygon Street, when I realised that I had not locked my car. For my own peace of mind, I decided to go back and lock it up. Having done that and riding back, I met Mary running late, so we rode together and joined the group, at about Dynon Road. At our toilet stop, I found we had been joined by 2 more riders at Royal Park, making 14 riders in all.

Resuming our ride, we found in the Lorimer Street bike lane we had glass clearing duties again. This time we had no branches to sweep them away. So it was a case of just picking them up and putting them in a discarded MacDonald's bag and later binning them. On to Caps, by now there was not a cloud in the sky and we picked up one more rider just in time to celebrate Patrick's birthday.

Nourished and refreshed we applied a bit of sun block and headed back. At the City we lost one rider and the rest headed back to Rushall. Not too hot, just a very pleasant ride.



Saturday Reports by David Downing.

### EDITOR'S ENDNOTE

Reports are included for all midweek and Saturday rides so congratulations to ride leaders for sending timely, well written and illustrated reports.

I am heading to South Australia and Northern Territory next week via Ghan and back on 15 March. Please keep reports coming and do not worry if I do not acknowledge them immediately.

The Wattle Glen to Hurstbridge Trail is due to open mid March so I hope the ride on 24 March will be able to explore it.

David