

WOBBLY WHEELS

Darebin BUG Mid-week Riders' Blog



WILLIAMSTOWN BEACH 1 MARCH

Eight riders met near Jika on a humid day that promised rain. Roger had yellow and blue balloons attached to his handlebars. No, it wasn't his birthday; he was making a political statement, he said.



Pam Stiles arrived and advised us she was only riding to morning tea. Ralph led off with Paul on tail, giving Roger a well-earned break.

We headed west on the city circle trail and regrouped near the back of the zoo. Down beside the Moonee Ponds creek we pedalled, turning right at the end on to Footscray Road. I had not been this way for at least six months, so noticed a big change with many more overhead bridges taking shape and a lot of busy workmen.

In Whitehall Street, the cacophony of truck engines, gears changing, and horns beeping was almost deafening, as we headed to the sanctuary of the Yarraville Gardens for morning tea.



I took a photo of the floral display in the gardens, which was very colourful. Pam Sierak informed us they were celosias, as she has recently planted some in her front garden. We bade farewell to the first Pam and the seven of us proceeded to Williamstown. There were a few keen people fishing in the Yarra as we cycled past. We rode through the park near the pier, where children from the nearby school were having recess. A few spots of rain turned into a shower as we arrived at the beach, near the old Rotunda café, for early lunch [11.30am] at the picnic shelter. The group agreed to have lunch due to the rain, in the hope that by the time we wanted to leave it would have ceased. Ralph and Colin noticed a group of swimmers training at the beach with a couple of people in canoes nearby for safety.



As we finished eating, a group of disabled adults and their carers arrived by bus, and I recognized a former student. Tony smiled when I introduced myself to him and seemed happy with his group.

On the return trip some of us began with coats but took them off at Newport station as we were too hot. However, the rain returned so we were rather wet upon arrival at Footscray Arts for afternoon tea. It was here I realized I had left my gloves at our lunch stop! A friendly young man of African descent asked directions and then chatted away to us, handing out his business card for an NDIS provider. Some of us were sitting further away from him with our coffees, but Ian H was closer, and the young man asked if he was a teacher, or a policeman! Ralph and Ian tried to remember Sue's shortcut through the old Flemington saleyards. While a wrong turn was made, we still found where we needed to be to ride under the train line past Kensington station. Although we were a small group, we enjoyed the ride on the first day of autumn.

Report by Nola

WESTERFOLDS PARK 3 MARCH

The weather forecast was 30 degrees for the first Thursday of Autumn and so it was great to see five other riders waiting at South Crescent. We took off at a leisurely pace to Darebin Parklands with Pam meeting us along the way, so seven riders. Riding via Darebin Creek trail south to Willsmere Park then onto the Main Yarra Trail. Up the couple of short sharp hills which well and truly got our hearts started. Along next to the freeway and then down into the cool of the Burke Road Billabong Reserve. It was a lovely clear and still morning but already warming up.

Along through the Yarra Flats to Warringal Parklands. Who should we see coming along the path but Alan who had come to join us. So, eight riders headed for our morning break at Possum Hollow.



George and Pam left us at Possum Hollow after our stop and we were six again. After about 5km we were at Bonds Rd catching our breath and having a drink stop. Alan suggested a slight detour that would take us along Bonds Road for a short way then on to

a track at the back of Odyssey House. The track meets the Main Yarra path again before Westerfolds Park. The detour cuts out the section that goes past the suspension bridge to Wombat Bend. Off we went.

We arrived at Westerfolds Park a bit too early for lunch. The plan was to do the Westerfolds Park Circuit then come back to the Porter Street Picnic Area for lunch or have a very early lunch. The group opted to wait for lunch and do the circuit including the big hill up to the manor. The views are good from the top and we got some downhill after that.



After a relaxing lunch under the shade of the Porter St picnic shelters, we made our way out of the park. Two of the group James and Ian H going onto the Eltham to take the train back and the rest of us riding back to Westgarth. Alan left us at Heidelberg, so three rode back via the Guide Dogs Centre and Chandler Highway to get back to Westgarth.

Another good ride. Distance 43 km.

Report from Sue Hiscock

WESTGARTHTOWN 8 MARCH

Twelve riders turned up for the ride, with Paul leading and Roger on tail. We rode up the Darebin Creek trail to Norris Bank reserve where we stopped for our morning tea. After a nice break we continued along the Darebin Creek trail until we reached the Ring Road trail. We then headed west going over Dalton Road, then High Street and after a short distance we turned north onto the Epping Creek trail. We rode along this trail until we arrived at German Lane which led us to the Westgarth town site.

We rode past the old German cemetery and along to the old homestead where we parked our bikes in the front garden. The caretaker gave us a short talk about the history of the farm and then we looked at the displays in the cottage and admired the beautiful garden. We had our lunch in the garden and then it was time to start heading home.

We rode back down the Epping Creek trail to the Ring Road and then headed west and along to the Merri Creek trail. We followed this trail back to the Coburg Lake. It was here that we turned off the trail and headed over to the coffee shop in Pentridge. After coffee we were back on the bikes and we joined the Merri Creek trail and headed back to Jika Jika.

Report by Paul (approx. distance 46 km)

RUFFY LAKE 10 MARCH

Possum Park appeared after 6 hard core Thursday riders plus one new chum Alan negotiated the well worn route. This morning tea favourite spot always provides good conversation and cheer albeit with no mention of Shane Warne. Now Wobbly Wheels can get a mention along with every news outlet in the country numerous times.

I digress because I have forgotten the ride.

After some brisk riding to show our new member what a professional outfit he may be joining we left the Yarra Trail to cross the Yarra River to the start of the Ruffy Lake trail to the lake where we had lunch. No one was inclined to do a lap lap of the park; maybe the hills had something to do with it.



The toss up between the old route and the new fell for the long grind up Church Street to finally wizz down to the Koonung trail. I decided to stay on this side of the freeway and cross over Springvale Rd and do a little gravel riding on the other side to check out Alan's skills. My chain wheels froze thus halving half my gears but exhibiting true leader grit we pushed on to the welcoming arms of the Chocolate shop. Coffeed and chocolated we wound through Wilson Reserve to The Boulevard and onwards to home. About 50 km.

Ian Hamilton

WARBURTON 15 MARCH

The weather report indicated that showers were expected for the day, which may have discouraged some riders. However nine riders turned up at the car park in Wandin North, including Roger who travelled all the way from Gisborne by train. As it turned out we had no rain for the whole day!

We headed off on the trail just before 10am. Our first stop was at the Killara station where we had morning tea. After morning tea we kept cycling along the trail observing several colourful Parrots and one lone Kangaroo. We rode past Woori Yallock, Launching Place, Yarra Junction, Wesburn, Millgrove and then finally we arrived at Warburton where we had lunch down by the Yarra river. It was certainly a very picturesque spot to rest, relax and prepare for the ride back to our cars.

On the way back we stopped at the Carriage Café for a most enjoyable afternoon tea with scones, jam and cream. Then we were back on the bikes and headed for our cars at Wandin North.

A very enjoyable days ride.

Report by Paul (Approx. distance 56km)

BUNDOORA PARK 17 MARCH

The forecast gave an 80 per cent chance of rain, but 10 participants showed up for my second ride back holding the reins ... they obviously hadn't read the forecast I saw. It was a good number for a Thursday. Alan was running a bit late and had to get off the limited-express train at Clifton Hill so met us at the corner of Westgarth and High streets on the way to the Merri Creek Trail. We were pleased to welcome Robin, a BUG member for nine months on her first group ride, who had a serious touring bike complete with Rohloff 14-speed rear hub. Mike Barnes from De Ver and North Fitzroy Cycles was also kind enough to grace us with his presence.

It was an easy run up to Coburg Lake for a relaxed morning tea surrounded by pre-school kids and contractors, who seemed to have a longer break than we did. James left us here as he had tradies coming in the afternoon and didn't want to give them any excuse to delay the job. Pam quickly followed to see if they were any good. The sky got pretty dark on the way to Bundoora Park and the forecast rain (perhaps surprisingly) dually arrived. Wet gear went on but most got a reasonably soaking before Robin got a flat tyre on Broadhurst Avenue near Ruthven Station and elected to catch the Mernda line train home. Roger had, off-course, offered to fix her puncture but was rebuffed so he was absolutely steaming, but that may have been due to the humidity. We hope Robin wasn't too deflated and will be back. Have you ever noticed how often tyres pick up puncture-producing projectiles like nails or glass in the rain?

At Bundoora Park we could pack away our wet gear before lunch in one of the picnic shelters. No one seemed to want to go to the café.



I had an artists' impression of the new shared bridge to be built across Lower Plenty Road near Greensborough Road as part of the North East Link project. This will be much better than the current narrow shared bridge on Silk Street that we use and will tie in directly with the River Gum Walk Trail that forms part of this ride, but the NE Link isn't due for completion until 2027/28, so stay healthy! You can bet the shared bridge won't be a high priority.

The run along Main Drive, through Ernest Jones Reserve and down beside Cherry Street Grasslands Reserve was uneventful but we're still looking for some earnest person with a sledgehammer to put a kerb crossing in for us to enter the reserve from Ernest Jones Drive. David Maunders availed himself of the railway station at McLeod to exit stage right and avoid the chug up to Silk Street.



After crossing the old shared bridge over Lower Plenty Rd, we posed for a photo at the site of the new one at the top of the River Gum Walk Trail and wondered if the old structure would be retained. Probably not legal anymore.

From this point on the bikes seemed to know their way home, although Mike tried to lead us up the climb to Darebin Parklands. Colin waved farewell at the Melbourne Innovation Centre in Wingrove Street to continue his experiments in nuclear fission, but perhaps he was just picking up his car. Mike peeled away from the peloton at Perry Street to continue his work on replacement graphics for old bikes and so by

the time we hit Westgarth there was only three for afternoon tea at Phil's Bakery, so not much commission for Roger. He pointed out that we should have done the ride the other way as there was not a spot of rain in Fairfield but the River Gum Walk Trail would have definitely been a walk for some of us in that direction. Total distance was 41km and there was some discussion about finding a bit more greenery to pad out this ride before lunch.

I spotted a new café opposite Terra Madre in High St with a familiar logo, Ardor Food Co., a gluten-free food outlet which used to be only in Coburg but has now moved its retail operation and coffee machine to a more lucrative location. Barbara was interested to have a look for one of her grandchildren and I was interested to have somewhere to buy GF lunch before rides when the cupboard is bare.

Wolter Kuiper

SUNSHINE AND KOROROIT CREEK 28 MARCH

We had 9 starters on a pleasantly cool day. Only the prettier half of the Pam and Paul duo turned up because the other half had jiggered his shoulder. The day progressed smoothly with no crashes, injuries, flat tyres or other mishaps. The threatened light rain even held off, apart from just a few inconsequential drops.

After morning tea in Footscray Park we slipped through Footscray and followed the relatively new and very direct path along the railway line all the way to Sunshine station where we had to walk our bikes up, over and down the long ramps except for smarty pants Roger who thought to take the lift. Two others followed his bad example and took the lift down. How dare they not suffer like the rest of us!

Kororoit Creek was a delightful cruise, albeit with a few minor ups. Then we had to navigate our way through major industrial areas, dodge monster trucks and get over Westgate Feeway to get to the new section along Kororoit Creek which was also lovely. More industries and suburbs finally got us to Newport Lakes where we eagerly devoured lunch. We rode over the Freeway via a new footbridge obviously designed to withstand Armageddon and along the railway line to coffee at Footscray Arts Centre. We only lost one rider there and didn't lose any more till we got to Carlton.

Jopie

JIKA TO HURSTBRIDGE 24 MARCH

My day started with train delays. Metro trains decided to have equipment faults with signals so I was twenty minutes late getting to Clifton Hill. I sent a message to Ian H which he missed. After a further delay trying to answer a call from Roger, I finally got to Jika at exactly 9.30 to find nine riders waiting. It was good to see Susan and David after a long break and Michael again on a Thursday. Roger indicated that he would leave at morning tea for a medical appointment and so we set off.

Along the Yarra Path I decided that DBUG riders needed more culture so we stopped to consider the Arthur Streeton painting.



We continued to Possum Park for morning tea and then on to the Eltham North playground for lunch. As we arrived we found a school cross country occupying the path but this ended during the course of our lunch.

Pam thought of turning back but decided to part ride to the end.

The next part of the ride began with the diversion due to the closure of the bridge just past the soccer ground. The diversion took us along a path parallel with Wattle Tree Road. It was only after we had begun that I noticed a sign that I had missed earlier saying that adult riders should dismount or ride on the road. There were no pedestrians and so we ignored this for our safety. The diversion took us through some quiet residential streets and then strangely, pointed up a steep hill. Having reconnoitred this, I ignored it and continued to Allandale Road and soon on to the Diamond Creek Trail, avoiding the hill. It was then straight forward riding through Diamond Creek to the new section of the trail.



The trail was nicely signposted with several large black steel bridges. The final section included a short but significant hill before crossing the final bridge to the Hurstbridge oval.

It was then a short ride to the station where four riders decided to head home instead of afternoon tea.



Ed, Ian, James and Michael headed to Meander Road to be greeted by the resident greyhound and enjoy muffins and tea on the patio.

A pleasant ride, only 40 km, not the 45 estimated in ride planning.

David

RALPH'S MYSTERY RIDE 29 MARCH.

Ralph had planned a sporting tour of Melbourne. He and Paul did a reccy late last year. In the ensuing weeks, Ralph wrote notes down of the various venues and he read these out to us along the way.

Our first stop was Ikon Park, or better known to most of us and Princes Park, home of the Carlton FC, where a lot of work was going on. It is to be the new headquarters of AFLW Ralph informed us. Ian H recalled coming here as a boy. I too came here as a nine-year-old with my grandpa. My highlight was jumping the fence at the end of the game to run onto the ground and pat the players on the back, as you could do in the sixties.



Next stop was the State Netball and Hockey centres at Royal Park. Mandy had been here when she was much younger. Ralph spoke about many hockey players coming from WA. People recalled well known players and coaches like Ric Charlesworth. State netball team Melbourne Vixens play here. After looking at both hockey fields, we returned to the capital city trail, turning off ten minutes later towards North Melbourne football ground. We didn't realize that it originally had a greyhound track around the side, while most of us do remember the gasometers at the city end. Ralph recalled the day they had an elephant on the field at half time!



Following morning tea at Docklands, we paused at Marvel Stadium, which opened in 2000 and is home to AFL, cricket, soccer and concerts. People mentioned concerts they had seen there – Mandy: Robbie Williams, Ralph: Andre Rieu. Crossing the Yarra, we rode east along Southbank, under the St Kilda Road bridge and stopped at the Melbourne Rowing club which was established in 1862. Many of the private schools also have rowing sheds either there or along the river, as it is more a sport for these schools, with their Head of the River boat races. Ralph said these began on the Yarra, then moved to the Barwon at Geelong and are probably now held at Lake Nagambie.



An enjoyable cycle along the south side of the Yarra brought us to Grange Road where we crossed over to the north side and rode to Gosch's Paddock. Melbourne FC has trained there, as do Melbourne Storm rugby league and Melbourne Rebels rugby union teams. We admired the architecture of AAMI stadium and then moved a little further on where the old Olympic Park is now the home of the Collingwood FC. We reminisced about the Glasshouse, which was once a pool, then a home for basketball and concerts last century. It certainly was a trip down memory lane.



Of course, the tennis centre, Rod Laver Arena, is nearby and who could forget our most recent Oz Open champion Ash Barty. John Cain Arena is home to concerts and netball as well as cycling. Last stop before lunch was Richmond FC at their Punt Road headquarters and we viewed Jack Dyer's statue. Ralph noted that Richmond was the first club to have a woman president, while there are two more now, being Melbourne and western Bulldogs. Lunch was in

Yarra Park in view of the MCG. Here I discovered that my sandwich was still in the car, so an apple sufficed until afternoon tea. Ralph asked the group who drew the biggest crowd at the MCG. Mandy and I thought it

was the Pope, while Ian correctly answered Billy Graham. Pam said she attended this rally of an estimated 130,000.

In the afternoon, we visited the old Fitzroy FC in Edinburgh Gardens and then guided by Ed, being a local, we rode to Victoria Park, the original home of Collingwood FC. Ralph's question of which famous couple and their 3 sons used to sit near here had them stumped, while Roger said was it you? And yes, it was!



Last stop was Bill Lawry Oval in Westgarth St, home of Northcote Cricket club and Northcote Park FC where Pastor Doug Nichols played football last century and former Test Captain Bill Lawry scored lots of runs.

Coffee and cake in Fairfield finished and informative and enjoyable day for the 8 others attending: Mandy, Graham, Paul, Pam, Ian, Ed, Roger and me. Perfect autumn weather, great company and a well-planned day. Many thanks to Ralph from us all.

Nola.

BRIMBANK PARK 31 MARCH

A brief shower sprinkled over nine willing riders waiting to tackle the long ride to Brimbank Park. One new rider Steve has joined the regular Thursday riders on his small Birdy bike. No doubt Roger has entertained all of us with his many anecdotes of his little bike on adventures overseas.

Luckily we set off with no more rain for the rest of the day and proceeded along the back streets of Brunswick to head for the little bridge over the Moonee Ponds Creek to the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail. We were all buoyed to reach morning tea after David told us of some birthday muffins.



After a delicious break we left for the long grind up and over the freeway to commence the trail along the Caterpillar factory leading to one more freeway crossing to Brimbank Park for lunch.

The Maribyrnong Creek Trail provided a lovely bush setting most of the way until the intrusion of new housing developments. It was nice to have a breather at Canning Reserve.

After an unplanned turn we did much puffing up hills to reach the lookout for a view of the former explosives factory from WWII.



An easy ride along the more urban Maribyrnong path, passing through Kensington, led us to the Capital City Trail and home.

Ian Hamilton. 60 km

SATURDAY RIDES

5 March

First ride of the month the intention was to ride down the Darebin Creek to Bundoora Park, coffee then return via St George's Road. Forecast 100% chance of rain, temperature 22 deg. Advice was sent out we would check the radar at the start to see how the weather was behaving and make a decision then, as to where we would ride.

Some one had good connections because after a torrential downpour overnight the rain desisted just before start time. The radar indicated that the eastern suburbs were getting a drenching and the rain was bypassing us, encouraging us to stick with the original plan. Start time we had 8 riders and we headed off, at Northcote, we picked up 3 more and on the Darebin Creek Trail we picked 1 more, making the dozen.

The creek was up and flowing rapidly under the bridge at Darebin Road the water was lapping just below the boards. There was very light misty rain, so light that it evaporated before it could wet anything. Good time was made riding along the creek and we arrived at Bundoora Park, a bit of a debate and the Homestead was selected over the visitors centre for refreshments.

Food seemed pretty good, I chose Devonshire Tea which was good, the soup also got a good mention. Refreshed

we headed back. All went well until Ivan broke a crank arm at the pedal hole and took a tumble. Somewhat maimed but not wounded he took advice from a local as to the location of the nearest railway station and scooted off on his good crank.

Through Reservoir, along the Railway Reserve Bike Path, down St George's Road Path and 4 of us arrived back to Rushall Station. The rest having dropped off at various streets convenient to their homes. Very pleasing to see a respectable turn out in the face of miserable forecast and no one got wet.



12 March

This was to be the usual ride, Rushall station to Port Melbourne, coffee and return via the MCG and Napier Street. Forecast was no rain, 23 deg., and high UV.

Come 9.30 we had 10 riders at Rushall and picked up 2 more at Royal Park. At our toilet stop at Docklands we got one more, making a lucky 13 group. A pleasant ride down to Caps at Port Melbourne and our coffee break.

Being retired I don't pay much attention to public holidays but on our way back, Moomba was very much brought to my attention. Southbank was crowded. We had several regrouping points along the river and the inconvenience was tolerable, until we discovered our last regroup point, at the Tripedal Dinosaur on Birrarung Marr was blocked by barriers and fun fair equipment. We individually, fortunately, all headed to the next regroup point above the MCG.

No more incidents it was back to Rushall where the consensus was, it had been a very pleasant ride.

19 March

The weather forecast was for a clear day, maximum temperature of 29 deg. but not until the ride was well over. We were starting at Rushall Station to Port Melbourne, via Capital City trail, coffee at Caps and return via the MCG and Napier Street.

At Rushall despite the good weather we only had 6 starters. At Royal Park we picked up 2 more riders, giving us a grand total of 8. With such a small group we moved along quite briskly. Regroups were very cursory affairs and we soon arrived at Caps for our coffee and chatter.

After coffees we lost one of our riders, leaving just 7 for the return trip. Docklands was quite crowded but Birrarung Marr was chockers, with edge to edge Geelong and Essendon supporters making their way to the big event. A bit of a battle but we all survived and arrived back at Rushall without further incident.

26 March

Forecast was for 24 deg, no rain but a little cool for the start. For our regular Rushall station to Port Melbourne and return, we had 10 riders for the start including 2 visitors, at Royal Park we picked up 2 more. The temperature was a little cool as we started off.

The ride to Caps was without incident and there was comment on it being a speedy run. We took refreshments at Caps and while there we gained another rider, lucky 13 again.

Heading back Kerrie's brakes gave off an annoying and persistent squeal. I recentred the calipers on the disk and that silenced it. Towards the MCD the crowd thickened, it was a Collingwood / Adelaide clash. We should be getting used to footy congestion but it was nice during lockdown when we seemed to have the hill to our selves (The only up side to those times). At our MCG regroup it was jackets off time, as we had all warmed up. In Napier Street, Faye had a flat but quick work soon had her going again. All arrived back at Rushall, after a pleasant ride.

David Downing

VALE ALAN HIGGINS



This month we were sorry to learn of the death of Alan Higgins last year. Unfortunately, news of his passing was not given to DBUG until now and also because of Covid regulations, members were not able to farewell him in the fashion given to Jack, Gordon, Vic and Janice.

Alan had not ridden for some years but served a long time as a ride leader and member of the ride planning group. He was notorious for his helmet, totally outside safety standards with chunks missing from the polystyrene. He steadfastly ignored calls to replace it and offers of a donation.

Alan was noted for collecting ring pulls from drink cans, which could be recycled into metal for prostheses for amputees and similar functions. He collected many kilograms and when rides took tea or lunch breaks, he could be seen scouring the vicinity for them. The photo above from 2014, shows Alan behind Paul searching for ring pulls at a pancake ride.

Alan was a keen cricket follower and travelled to England and elsewhere to support the Australian test team. He also went riding in France with Glenys and Bill.

If anyone has stories or photos of Alan to share please forward for the April Wobbly.