

Volume 13 | Issue 1

Date: January 2024

# WOBBLY WHEELS

Darebin BUG Mid-week Riders' Blog



Welcome all members and readers to 2024!

## HIDDEN MELBOURNE 2 JANUARY

Being the first ride of the year, I wasn't expecting many takers. The 9am start was sure to trip up a few people, wasn't it? Still ended up with eight including Mike Barnes, who's allowed to ride again at last, plus the regulars. Must have been my false advertising. Pam and Paul Si arrived one minute late as Pam's e-bike had a flat battery and she'd had to revert to the old clunker.

First order of business was the Walmer Street Bridge, the reopening of which we'd missed by half an hour during the last ride of 2023. Given the absence of Pam's e-bike, we skipped the Gipps Street Bridge and Yarra Boulevard climb so we just did the new concrete zigzag up to Walmer Street, but Jopie rode across to the much improved "land bridge" on the Studley Park side ... he was never seen again. No, not true.



First official stop was the site of the birthplace of Dame Nellie Melba on Burnley Street. It was called Doonside in 1861 but it's marked by a plaque on the current building. Second stop was the Burnley Theatre built in 1928 with an ornate "Adam style" interior but operating as a furniture showroom since 1959. Sue noticed the amazing clouds and took the picture for Wobbly Wheels.



Then it was off to the Tan Track and Kings Domain to pay our respects to Edith Cavell, the head of medical training in a hospital in Brussels during World War 1, who was happy to treat Allied and

German troops but also to help repatriate British soldiers. The Germans did not take kindly to this and she was executed in 1915.

I could go on like this but if you read the book, you probably won't want to see the movie sequel next January, right? Morning tea was at the Royal Botanic Gardens Observatory Gate area, where Jon managed to find us after missing the time change from 9.30am ... a trap for newbies. Pam and Paul Si left us there, so only one down.

We got to admire the new separated, but unfinished, bike lanes along St Kilda Road, checked out Fitzroy Street's hidden baroque mansion, had lunch at the South Melbourne gasworks park with lots of conversations happening, ducked into Flinders Lane and admired the Fitzroy Cable Tram Engine House (1887) and the 1854 Royal Terrace houses

across Gertrude Street. The engine house was the biggest in Melbourne, operating cable winders for three lines. Did I mention that there's one at 626 High St, Northcote, now occupied by panel beaters? Never mind, I've said too much already.

Suffice to say we had afternoon tea at the Park Street Café, when Roger left us to catch the train. Not soon enough, as it turned out, as he still copped a soaking on the way home from the train in Gisborne but reported making it safely.

The forecast was bang on for 3pm showers in the city, but it turned out to be a big thunderstorm with the dog proceeding to sit on my feet under the desk, where it remains as I type this. Hopefully, next January the bike lanes along La Trobe Street, blocked by the Metro Tunnel project, will be open all the way again.

Report by Wolter

## **AD HOC RIDE – KOROROIT CREEK 4 JANUARY**

The ad hoc ride was to be a reversal of the Sunshine – Kororoit Creek trail ride. How lost would we get?

Five riders for the day and the weather forecast promising a good riding day – overcast, no rain, not too hot or too cold – just right.

Through Parkville and just skirting the edge of Royal Park grasslands we were off. On the way along Arden Street in North Melbourne we turned off to have a look at the new Arden Metro Station. It's an interesting arch design and above ground looks almost ready to go.

The Dynon Road shared path seemed a little busier than usual possibly because the Footscray Road shared path remains closed. Through Footscray we rode to Yarraville station and on towards our morning tea stop at McNish Reserve next to Stony Creek.

Crossing the West Gate freeway at the Muir Street overpass it seemed like little had changed with the Big Build path works around there. Except lots of concrete shared paths and ramps going off in the distance and not linking yet.

We negotiated our way through Newport and Altona North to Barnes Road and the Kororoit Creek path with just a couple of small directional hiccups. Rumour had it that the Kororoit Creek path 'missing link' had been completed north to the Federation trail in Brooklyn. Alas unfortunately it was just wishful thinking. We got to the end of the open path just past Hoskin Reserve to see the new path still closed. We turned back onto Blackshaws Road to cross over the Westgate freeway at the Altona North Brooklyn Overpass.





We met the Federation trail just after that for a small section and then back onto the other part of the Kororoit Creek path on our way through Brooklyn (which was having a bit of a smell-a-thon day).

Our lunch stop was at Buckingham Reserve in Sunshine. I managed to lock one of the public toilets accidentally as I was leaving it. We couldn't get it unlocked and it looked like the other toilet had probably been locked in the same way.

Our trip back was on the Sunshine-Footscray path, stopping for afternoon tea at the Milking Station café in Footscray.

No mechanicals or punctures. Another good ride. Distance approx. 55km.

Report by Sue

## **ELWOOD CANAL AND CAULFIELD RACECOURSE 9 JANUARY**

Today was a day of flooded trails, a crash and some nasty steps. Apart from that nothing to report except I have to write something so here goes.

The weather was sublime, sunny with a top of about 24 and no wind. 13 riders turned up, augmented at morning tea at Albert Park by he who shall remain nameless who forgot that we are starting at 9am now. A brief highlight was the tortuous but very effective route to get us through the Anzac Station construction area, which involved riding about 50m along the tram stop platform. Elwood Canal & Elsternwick Park passed by without incident, and we managed to get to the Racecourse without getting lost. Getting into it through the road tunnel was easy and fun but getting out was another matter. Our new rider Ken heading down into the exit tunnel managed to crash over the handlebars with grazes, bruises and a whack on his helmet. After a rest to let the shock subside we all carefully returned to the Racecourse picnic area for lunch, after which Ken caught the train home from the nearby Caulfield Station.

The rest of us continued on our merry way, up and down a few minor hills until, at Heyington Station, we were confronted by a nasty set of steps. A few grumbles & grizzles with huffing and puffing to get the electric bikes up said steps and I realised that I had better take route B in future or suffer severe repercussions.

Then there were two flooded sections of trail. The Yarra was flooding after the previous two days of deluge. Two rode through the first section while the rest of us gingerly walked our bikes along the beaten down long grass beside it but no way could we get past the next section, about 100m before Walmer Street bridge. So we adjourned to Frankie Says for coffee. Then up some easier steps augmented by a goods lift and to Walmer Street bridge the long way, over Gipps Street Bridge and homewards, except several of us then detoured to ogle at Dights Falls thundering in full flood.

Report by Jopie

## **JACK ROPER RESERVE 11 JANUARY**

Eight riders: Sue, Jon, Michael, Roger, Ian, George, Colin and Andrew gathered for the day's ride. The weather was fine and warm with the promise of some heat later in the day.

We set off along South Crescent, across Station Street and onto the bike path beside the railway line. At Alphington Station we crossed into Darebin Parklands and followed the Darebin Trail north to Norris Bank Park where we stopped for morning tea.

Michael was riding a new bike. So, unsurprisingly, the main topic of conversation all day was why he chose that bike, what features it has, is it better than this or that, etc. etc.



*The new bike.*

After morning tea it was back onto the Darebin Trail and north to the Ring Road Trail where we turned left and headed towards Jack Roper Reserve for lunch.



George left us after lunch and after a conference it was decided to head further west and to take the Moonee Ponds Path south towards Jika Jika. At Pascoe Vale we left the Moonee Ponds Trail and after taking Prospect Street, to avoid the Gaffney Street hill, we took back streets to the O'Hea Street bike path. Another conference was held to decide whether to take the Upfield or Merri Creek paths towards Jika Jika, we decided to take the Upfield.

Sue left us just before Brunswick Road, the rest of the group continued to the Inner Circle Trail where we turned left. At Velo Cycles we stopped for afternoon tea, Jon and Roger left us here. Following afternoon tea the remaining riders dispersed to make their way home.

Report by Andrew

## **BLACKBURN LAKE 16 JANUARY**

A smallish group turned up at Jika Jika with the forecast for 30 degrees. I had decided the ride would be unchanged with the possibility that there where an option for any riders feeling the heat to catch a train after lunch at Blackburn station. It was a comfortable low 20's when the ride set off on the familiar route (South Crescent, Wingrove Street, Darebin Creek Trail, Anniversary Trail) to Frog Hollow for morning tea. I had been contacted the night before by Roberta, who we had not been on a ride for a while, and was joining the group along the Anniversary Trail for a catch up at morning tea.



It was then off on Anniversary Trail to Alemain Station to join Gardeners Creek Trail for the gradual climb to Blackburn Lake for lunch. There is a fair amount of shade most of the way. Instead of the usual direct shortest route to the lunch spot everyone agreed we would circumnavigate the lake.



After lunch everyone was happy to stay with the ride. Instead of the usual route heading north to Koonung Creek Trail we headed west following the rail line to Box Hill. This is a mixture of wide shared paths and some quiet roads. There is one tricky bit where the path has an underpass under Middleborough Road. There is a 180 degree u-turn with a short but steep rise immediately after the turn. At Box Hill it is largely downhill to afternoon tea. We headed north on back streets to Bushy Creek then the Koonung Trail to the Chocolate Shop in Bullen Road for afternoon tea. By afternoon tea it was getting close to 30 deg and everybody enjoyed the air-conditioning. It was then back to Koonung Trail where unfortunately Roger had a serious fall. He left the path and fell trying to get back on. He was in significant pain and required an ambulance. The ambulance arrived within about 20 minutes having to push the trolley a considerable distance from the nearest road, the paramedics began assessment and realised they would also need the Fire Brigade to help the ambulance gain access to the path and help lift Roger onto the trolley. The entire riding group remained at the scene to provide support as required until the ambulance left. Roger was taken to St Vincents where he was diagnosed to have a broken left hip.



The rest of the ride home was a sombre atmosphere.

Report by Ian S

## **HEDGELEY DENE GARDENS 18 JANUARY**

With the weather warming up for summer, started in sunshine. Following clockwise around the Anniversary Trail and having morning tea at Frog Hollow Reserve. Continuing on we arrived at the gardens, riding at the end along some back lane into the gardens after negotiating a tree partially down. On arrival, as we were early, a quick vote decided we would continue along Gardeners Creek trail and onto lunch at Kevin Bartlett Reserve in Richmond. Nice spot but open to some gusty winds. After lunch we continued along the Yarra trail as the river had subsided enough to journey up and over the new Walmer Street bridge with afternoon coffee at the convent, after some very quick but substantial rain. Then finishing along the Fairfield trail past Dights Falls.



Report by Jon

## **KOONUNG CREEK TRAIL 23 JANUARY**

Fifteen riders were waiting at Jika Jika by 9am on a good day for riding. The temperature was pleasant and even better there was no wind. We set off towards Darebin Parkland with Paul as the tail and while in the parkland received a call to wait a bit for the last riders. When Paul arrived, he indicated that he had a brush with a bollard and needed minor repairs to himself and his bike. While this was happening, other riders chatted in the morning sun. We resumed riding after a couple of minutes and flew down the hill to the end of the Darebin Creek path.

We then turned onto Kilby Road and up and over the hill to Hays Paddock where we had a brief stop while some riders observed the playground renovations and upgrade. We soon hit the Koonung trail near Burke Road and then rode on to the normal stop at the Koonung Creek playground only to find that the seating was occupied, so we decided to continue on to the Elgar Park playground near the Box Hill miniature steam railway where there was plenty of seating in the shade and a chance for a good chat over the morning cuppa.

After the break Jenny & Pam S left the group, we headed back to the trail then rode on the south side of the freeway to Park Road then turned to ride back on the north side of Eastlink. The riding conditions varied from bitumen to gravel with some small wash-aways and the occasional tree root, all of which provided some challenges for riders. Once we were on the north side of the freeway heading back towards home it was generally easy riding downhill after the earlier long slow grind uphill. We turned off to the Boronia Grove pavilion and toilets, and when waiting there a number of riders expressed a wish to stop for lunch in the shade under the nearby trees, even though there were no seats or tables, since it was after 12 noon. So after a bit of grunting and groaning most riders managed to find acceptable seating on the ground and had a good lunch and time for more talk.





It was soon time to get back on the bikes and continue riding on the north side of the Freeway along with lots of bumps in the path surface. Along the way we stopped for a mechanical on Robin's bike when the chain fell off and Michael informed us that her bike had a bent derailleur hanger. After a couple more road crossings we reached the flash new Bulleen Park and Ride interchange which doesn't yet show up on google maps. While there sheltering under cover from the sun Robin received a call from Glennys asking "where are you"? She had taken a short cut and headed for a stop at the chocolate shop while the rest of us took the rough road. Luckily, we were only about 500m away so we headed to the chocolate shop to relax and had another long chat with plenty of refreshments including milkshakes and chocolates. On the journey back to Jika Jika people departed for home so only a couple completed the circuit. Ride distance was about 45km.

Report by Ed

## **WILLIAMSTOWN BEACH VIA MOONEE PONDS 25 JANUARY**

Five riders set off from Jika Jika. We rode via City Link, Upfield and Brunswick bike paths, then Hope Street, over Freeway foot bridge and Moonee Ponds Creek and Down to Maribyrnong river. Morning tea Moonee Ponds area.

We then rode down river and on to Williamstown Beach shelter for lunch.

Back via Hide Street had coffee corner shop just past Footscray Station.

Continued our way back via Dynon Road to Upfield path.

We went our own way home from there, it was a great day to ride. Ideal day for me.

Thanks to James, John, Sue, and Pam for your company.

Report by George

## **WATTLE PARK & BOX HILL 30 JANUARY**

A beautiful sunny day with 10 riders from Jika Jika plus Roberta who joined us as we passed by her new home in Kew. A few hills here and there but nothing that good legs or an electric bike couldn't handle. After Back Creek and Wattle Park we tackled Deakin University where we went under the big high bridge and then over it after wheeling our bikes through the foyer of one of their buildings. Lunch was at Surrey Park Lake where we had to wait for a tai chi class to finish before we could nab the tables for our sit down lunch. The exeloo there put soap on our hands but wouldn't give us any water to wash it off with! Then in Box Hill we were blocked by new work for the Suburban Rail Loop which no one realised had been started, so an impromptu detour was worked out.

The Chocolate Shop as usual served superb milkshakes and chocolates and I didn't hear any complaints from the coffee drinkers either. The rest of the ride proceeded smoothly with a split in the ranks when a splinter group decided that the Wilsons Reserve Hill would be too daunting. From there we had the usual peeling offs till we only had 2 riders left at Westgarth.

Report by Jopie