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WOBBLY WHEELS

Darebin BUG Mid-week Riders' Blog



RALPH'S SPORTING TOUR OF MELBOURNE 3 DECEMBER

11 Riders – 5 women and 6 men, met at Jika Jika on a cloudy, muggy December morning. Ralph explained there would be several stops during the ride, with information shared at each venue.

With me on tail, off we cycled across the Capital City Trail to Ikon Park, home of Carlton FC. There is still much building work being done on this site, which is also the home of AFLW and where their Grand Final had been played two days prior. Ian H commented he wished they could win more games!

Returning to the trail, we stayed on the east side of the tram line past the zoo and rode to the Netball and Hockey centre. A few of us recalled playing netball here on outside courts in our younger days, while Ralph noted that hockey was played here during the 2006 Commonwealth Games. Others remembered how the area was known as Camp Pell during the Second World War, as housing for American soldiers. It was famous for the 'Brownout Strangler', as Eddie Leonski was known. After the war it became housing for displaced people.



Back alongside the Moonee Ponds Creek heading south, we turned off near Macauley Station and cycled to Arden Street Oval, via the noisy barks from the Lost Dogs Home. Ralph remembered being at the footy as a teenager, when a circus elephant was the half time entertainment! Famous names were tossed around, such as Ron Barassi, Allen Aylett and Keith Grieg. Two gasometers used to be on one side of the oval, leading me to recall a player known as the 'galloping gasometer', Mick Nolan. As North Melbourne won the AFLW grand final on Sunday, many people were here yesterday celebrating the victory.

Morning tea was at Ron Barassi Senior Oval in Docklands. Ron was the first VFL footballer to die in action at Tobruk in WW2. With his son Ronald Dale, being a VFL/AFL legend, this is where the father/son rule came from.

Pam left us after our tea break. Next stop was Marvel Stadium which opened in 2000 and is used for football, cricket, soccer, motorcross and concerts. We tried to remember its many sponsors' names.

Crossing the Yarra, we headed east toward Crown and Southbank, pausing after Princes Bridge at the Rowing Sheds, to see who could recall the names of the Oarsome Foursome, from the Sydney Olympics.



After cycling over the Swan Street Bridge, we stopped at AIA Centre, Collingwood's training base. Ralph explained that one of the roles of the archives group is to set up displays inside the building for the public to view. The most recent one is on Nathan Buckley, a famous Magpies player.

We noticed a large group of primary school children leaving the oval area, carrying Magpie show bags and walking to nearby buses. Their uniform showed they came from the school, where a boy died when a car drove through a fence recently.

Following a quick stop at AAMI Stadium, we crossed at the lights and rode up between John Cain Arena and the Tennis Centre. As we turned right at the MCG, a group of new Richmond recruits were having their photos taken. Punt Road Oval, the home of the Tigers, was our final venue before lunch, near the statue of Jack Dyer.

Lunch was in Yarra Park, not far from Jolimont station. Though there were picnic tables available, they were in the sun, so we sat on the grass in the shade of some trees instead.

After lunch, we visited Brunswick Street Oval, where Fitzroy used to play, followed by Victoria Park, Collingwood's original home ground until the end of 1999, after which they moved to the MCG for home games. Ralph informed the group that the highest attendance here was 47,200. Our family has many happy memories of attending matches here when our boys were young.

Ralph organized for Ken T to tell us about his family's links to the area. We rode to Brearly Reserve at the east end of the oval and Ken pointed out the rented house where his Mum grew up. She worked at the nearby Abbotsford Mills as a machinist, while his dad lived in several different rented houses in and around Lulie Street. They married in 1938. Obviously very keen Collingwood supporters, the family eventually moved to Highett, where Ken grew up in a St Kilda zone! While he did try out for the U19s, his mum was very happy he decided to play for Highett instead. His mum always told him 'We're from Collingwood', so imagine his surprise to see his birth certificate, stating he was born at Mentone hospital!



Glenys left for the dentist after Fitzroy, while Sue, Ed and Ken departed from Collingwood. Ian H, Roger, Cathy, James, Ralph and me rode to Bill Lawry oval in Westgarth Street, where Roger bid us farewell. The remaining 5 of us enjoyed cool drinks at a café in Fairfield.

Thanks to Ralph for a great day's ride of 35km.

Report by Nola

BRIMBANK PARK 5 DECEMBER

Who says BUG rides are a waste of time? Not me, I salvaged 19 cable ties from the back wall of our picnic shelter at Brimbank Park ... 19!! If I'd been a bit more careful with the side cutters I could have had well over 20.

We haven't been to Brimbank for a while, with Parks Victoria closing large junks of the Maribyrnong River Trail due to flood damage, but the cable ties were fresh ... possibly the work of the crowd I'd seen there the previous Saturday.

The forecast was for hot weather, but I still had eight volunteers for the return to Brimbank, with Colin kindly riding tail. Sue was back from her NZ trip carrying minor scars from her organised ride from Lake Tekapo. Tim was back from the final Great Victorian Bike Ride with no scars but reporting that there were "only" 2000 riders, not enough to make a profit even for the event's last hurrah. Roger had been ensnared by the testing of "High-Capacity Signalling technology" on the Sunbury Line for the Metro Tunnel project and had left his bike at Jika Jika because of the bus replacements. He had a rather detailed chart of his timetable from Gisborne which, with the usual delays, took several hours. It's not often anyone beats Roger to Jika Jika.

Mindful of the forecast, we still set off on time past the site of North Melbourne's great (AFLW) victory at Ikon Park, through Flemington Racecourse to Pipemakers Park, Footscray, where the vine-entwined bower was a great spot for morning tea.



We then avoided a canine, whose owner told it to "stop" and then "come here" in rapid succession (is it any wonder some dogs become killers) and conquered the nasty climb out of Pipemakers to Highpoint and Village Green, bypassing a big bend in the Maribyrnong River.

Here another wonder of the 21st century, the North Western Sewer Connection, has failed to emerge from the riverbank, along with the promised new pipe bridge across the river and connecting path through the Medway Golf Course. We stopped but could not hear the tunnel boring machine that was supposedly halfway (400m) in January. So there was a slight northward deviation to Canning Street before we finally got on the Maribyrnong River Trail for the schlep west to Brimbank. The damaged path has been "re-sheeted" with crushed granite and some new safety fencing installed but there remain nearly 10 gaps, mostly near Brimbank Park.

We aimed for the high (righthand) side on most of these gaps although Roger was caught out on the edge of one of the new bits.

The only gap that makes any sense is near Canning Street, where the sewer contractor will need heavy-vehicle access to install the pipe bridge. Some closure signs were still in place, but the trail was clearly open, and the toilet block in Car Park C, which had been open on previous visits was now closed again but the ones at Car Park B were still open. The Brimbank Park Café, now called Lumbar & Co, was also open. We reminisced about the location filming that was taking place for the NBC's La Brea television series when we were here last. Apparently, it was the most expensive series ever filmed in Victoria and if you'd seen all the new gear out there, you'd understand.

After the cable-tie excitement, we climbed out of Brimbank Park and headed through Keilor and Niddrie to the rebuilt "Peregrine Rise" shared path above Valley Lake, where a café called Perry's is now open in the former sub-division sales office, after only 15 years!

We headed home via Moonee Ponds where Jopie's favourite Queens Park Café was still closed. We weren't planning on stopping anyway and almost managed to lose Colin briefly while zig zagging up from the Maribyrnong River valley.

People disappeared at regular intervals, heading for showers and cold drinks.

Roger had to ride all the way back to Jika Jika to leave his bike until Tuesday's ride, while Colin, Mike and Tim declined to help me return the first aid kit.

This ride is based on one curated by BUG elder Jopie B and I'd like to pay my respects to him and his compatriots, past, present and emerging.

Despite my efforts to run it for the more hardened audience who rock up on Thursdays, a certain degree of difficulty remained, and Jopie's name was mentioned several times... Rest assured, this adventure has gone to the bottom of my ride pile and will not re-emerge until the new shared path through the Medway Golf Course is completed. If we're still alive.

Report by Wolter

CHRISTMAS LUNCH RIDE 10 DECEMBER

The best laid plans of mice and men..... Three trial rides had the timing and route planned to perfection. Admittedly 2 riders on the recce rides were going to be faster than a ride of 23, but I had allowed 2 hours for the ride and a half hour for morning tea, parking the bikes at my house and walking to the lunch spot, and 30 mins or so additional time for taking longer with a larger group.

All was going well as we cycled down the Linear Park Bike Path, through the cemetery and whizzed down through Royal Park.



The crossing of Flemington Road was slow, but we got through the very fast lights at Boundary Road much quicker than I had anticipated, so we were on track as planned when we hit the Moonee Ponds Trail. That was until we hit the sign that said the path was flooded and that there was a detour. I am now thinking that the detour may have been further down the trail rather than the turn off at the sign. Crossing the major train tracks seemed unusual, the very narrow path by the tracks strange. I was only glad that the gate at the end of the path opened, as turning around would have been difficult. Apologies David, it was definitely not made for a recumbent!

Going down the one-way street after passing the North Melbourne Station was luckily without incident and with the sight of Festival Hall, I knew where I was. Morning tea was taken at the little nook at Docklands rather than the rotunda at Beacon Cove and it was a leisurely one as the route to return was now definitely being recalibrated. We crossed Jim Stynes Bridge and were strung out the length of the path to the bridge crossing and it was then on to the path beside Jeffs' shed. We had a quick photo under the reindeer and then continued along South Bank.



Rode around the tennis centre and then up the MCG hill and the roads beside the Fitzroy Gardens. Napier Street was straightforward, and it was soon time to park the bikes and head to 4 Beans. The café was full, there were 34 BUG people for lunch! The café was very efficient and an excellent meal was had. Thanks Nola for organising the venue. Thanks also to Wolter for keeping the group on track. It was especially fitting that both the head and tail of the line of cyclists were looking resplendent in their Christmas tops!
 Report by Glenys (Ride Leader)

MELTON TRAILS EXPLORATORY 12 DECEMBER

A big part of this ride was getting to and from the start at Melton Station. Firstly the 8.57 trail from Westgarth had been changed by Metro to the 9.04 according to the PTV app. I didn't tell anyone and just as well because it turned up right on 8.57 as per the old timetable. Then at Southern Cross there was no way of knowing which platform the Melton train would depart from much ahead of time. Last time I went to Melton it left from Platform 15. Then 30 minutes before departure the VLine app finally told me it would be from platform 8A where we duly went, only to find that 5 minutes earlier it had been changed to 5A. Sacre Bleu!! Anyway we had enough time and we all got on and our fears about getting bikes onto the XPT were found to be unfounded. All 8 bikes got on no problem, despite the Vline app saying we could only take one bike per carriage or 6 in total. The return trip was a little tetchier as the grumpy conductor on the half full train from Ballarat insisted we space out our 6 bikes over several carriages. That train pulled in to platform 1 at Southern Cross where I think all Ballarat trains might start & finish, or maybe not. It appears that every second train only goes to Melton and could depart from almost any platform.

Anyway back to the ride. It was a beautiful day forecast for a top of 28 and we had 8 keen starters. Melton has heaps of nice concrete bike paths along creek valleys and through parks, linked up via generally quiet streets, also several lakes, both flood retarding lakes and smaller ornamental ones. Morning tea was at the very nice Melton Botanical Gardens overlooking the main lake there and lunch was overlooking another good lake at Navan Park. The ride was almost entirely flat except for one section where we descended gingerly down a steep gravel road to Arnold Creek, manhandled the bikes, including 2 electrics, past 2 full width concrete barriers on the narrow bridge over the creek and then huffed up the other side. In the grander scheme of things it was only really fairly small compared to some of the hills we have done and everyone handled it well (especially the electric bikes ha ha).

Two of the group took the shorter route back to the station at the 80% point and avoided the down and up, but thereby also missed the views over Melton Reservoir. From Southern Cross 5 out of the remaining 6 took the train home and one stalwart rode.

So no punctures, accidents, injuries or other dramas and I think a good day was had by all

Report by Jopie

CAPITAL CITY TRAIL – COMO AND BURNLEY GARDENS 17 DECEMBER

After a 39 degree day on Monday, it was a relief that the morning temperature and gentle breeze was just right for cycling. Ten riders set off along the Capital City Trail to the west for a pleasant ride to the Botanic Gardens. We headed along Southbank but the path was blocked under St Kilda Road, so we diverted around the Convent hall before a brief jaunt past the music bowl and headed towards the Oak lawn in the Botanic Gardens but found a more pleasant spot for morning tea nearby and out of the sun.



Morning tea Botanic gardens

After plenty of time for chatting we left Pam behind, walked around the gardens and observed a very bright Illawarra Flame tree then scooted down the Anderson Street hill and then onto the main path around the Yarra River towards Como. We had another look at the Como gardens including the kitchen garden and tried to identify what the plants were, and what they were used for. On the way out we managed to lose Roger, Tim, Ian H and Michael, however Roger was eventually able to find the exit and join us for the ride down the single-track gravel path where we were able to meet up with the three amigos. The ride was then diverted again onto the grass and around some workers who were replacing an electric light pole in Alexandra Avenue.

We made it to the Kevin Bartlett Reserve for lunch and were soon joined by Ian S as he was delayed by having to entertain a grandchild. After lunch we had a short ride, then we walked around the Burnley Gardens and observed more plants, before heading along the bike path up the Walmer Street hill. We stopped on the Gipps Street bridge near the Salvos in Abbotsford to check out the progress of the new bike and pedestrian ramp. It is nearly complete, but about 30m is still missing.

Our last stop was after a brief stroll through the Abbotsford Convent gardens, stopping for a long chat over afternoon drinks, but not before Roger, Meg and Ken departed for home.

Ride length about 35 km.



Jacaranda at the Abbotsford convent

Report by Ed

BLACKBURN LAKE (REVERSED) 19 DECEMBER

A warm day of 28c was forecast for the last ride of the year.

Our route took us south to the bike lane on Chandler Highway, past the Guide dogs and down onto the Main Yarra Trail. Then a slight alternate route up Kilby Road and through Hays Paddock onto the Koonung Creek Trail.

With the major works along the Eastern Freeway, each ride along the Koonung Creek trail seems to have more work sites or cleared parklands. We stopped for morning tea at Elgar Park where there were some tables in the shade.



Riding along the Bushy Creek Parklands we turned just before Dorking Road to go along a quieter and slightly less uphill street towards Box Hill. Crossing Whitehorse Road we turned onto the Box Hill-Ringwood path. We made it to Blackburn Lake for an early lunch, not a bad thing as the heat was starting to kick in.

Our return trip was via Gardiners Creek and the Anniversary Trails. A few riders went on but the rest of us stopped at a café in Hartwell on the way through.

It's always good to say we had no mechanicals, punctures or other mishaps. Unusually way more push bikes than ebikes.

Another good ride and a very pleasant day. Approx. 50km

Report by Sue

For anyone interested the following is a page leading to an article by Wolter in GroundEffect titled Rode to Bethlehem and dated 10 December 2024.

The page will need to be typed into a browser as pdfs don't work for links.

<https://www.groundeffect.co.nz/blogs/news/rode-to-bethlehem>

Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and a safe and relaxing Holiday Season.

See you on a ride in 2025!