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WOBBLY WHEELS
Darebin BUG Riders' Blog

GLEN WAVERLEY TO HEATHERDALE
3 FEBRUARY

This ride started as an excuse to try the new section of the Dandenong Creek Trail created as part of a level-crossing removal on Webster Street in Dandenong. They just closed the road and put a shared path under the railway bridge but you still have to cross Dandenong's main drag, Lonsdale Street.

We made good time to Richmond Station, so good that we could catch an earlier train to Glen Waverley. No sign of Ed, who'd sent an apology after his hip replacement on Friday, LOL. No sign of Roger, who'd decided to wait in the glorious confines of Southern Cross for the correct train.

We managed to all assemble in Glen Waverley for the route downhill to Jells Park, along which the council was putting up "rail trail" signs (there was never a railway line down there) rather than put in a decent pedestrian crossing at Springvale Road.

After morning tea at Jells, we headed south via the Eastlink and Dandenong Creek trails to see our taxes at work. Having discovered that Greaves Street and Station Street were the best routes to get to Dandenong Station from the DCT, no one had the good grace to ask if they could catch the train home so everyone got to try the fresh concrete path under the railway bridge (see image).

Across Dandenong Creek to the north, work had started on building a deeper railway underpass on Cheltenham Road for container trucks to get to Lonsdale Street and several shops had been demolished.

(see artist's impression, where Webster Street is at the bottom).

There was a substantial detour along the Lonsdale Street footpath but we made it to the lunch spot at Dandenong Park shortly after noon. After an overnight low of just 11, it was now getting hot and we were heading into the wind, which had not abated to our liking.
After a nice stretch along the Dandenong Creek Trail that was new to some, we had to slog it out the rest of the way to Heatherdale Station.
Water sources are few and far between on this gradual uphill stretch and the water fountain at Koomba Park had to be coerced into filling water bottles.

Hopefully there'll be something more appropriate when the new playground is finished.
Fortunately, everyone made it to the station for the trip back to town in air-conditioned comfort.

Report by Wolter

MERNDA RIDE
5 FEBRUARY

A little confusion over the meeting spot meant that most of the riders were waiting at Merri station. By the time the train got to Mernda there were a dozen of us.
The Hawkstowe Park section had been dumped unceremoniously when I had changed the planned route over the previous weeks. The demolition of the upper level toilet block and the lack of toilet reliability of the area down the big hill meant Hawkstowe Park was step too far.
A more pleasant morning tea stop was at the Mernda Adventure Playground just a short ride from Mernda Station and close to Mernda Drain and wetlands. This meant we could explore the north western side of Mernda before lunch.
After our morning break we rode along paths next to Mernda Drain/Creek up to Masons Road where the houses end and the paddocks begin. Then through back streets past Mernda Village Hill (a big grassy hill) and south towards Simons Creek with Granite Hills to the right of us.
We had a short stint on the Mernda Rail Trail just before Hawkstowe Station then turned off to the Lakes Boulevard and Hendersons Road Drains. Not sure if these drains will ever become creeks.
We eventually met up with the Darebin Creek path and lunched at Norris Bank Park.

A few riders left us at various points after that. The rest of us continued to Alphington and the Area 52 café.
It was a good day for a bike ride and good company. No mechanicals.
Approx. 45km back to Jika Jika

Report by Sue

WILLIAMSTOWN
10 FEBRUARY

A cool cloudy morning with a prospect of 25C later, was a welcome relief from our hot dry summer. Michael offered to go on tail and I said we would regroup at the zoo, as it would be tricky for 15 riders to all cross a road at once. This proved to be the case straight away, as only James, Jan and I made it across High Street. We did wait this time but then rode across the Inner Circle Trail towards Princes Park.
At the zoo, we were greeted by Sue, who had ridden there from home. That made us 16.
An uneventful ride down the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail to Docklands, where we did a left turn onto the Dixon Veloway above Footscray Road. Glenys took the lead at this point as it was my first trip on the bike path and she knew where to turn at the end.
The first part is an incline and Glenys seemed to disappear into the distance on her E-bike. Fortunately, Jan told me to turn left at the end and cycle over the Maribyrnong River.
Following Glenys, we turned left again and found the raised bike path that took us straight to the northern end of Yarraville Gardens, without having to cross a road or watch out for trucks! The entry is further down on the western side and we soon found our usual morning tea spot. Two latecomers soon arrived in the shape of Ian S and Steve. Did you guys sleep in I wonder? Apparently, Ian was reading the AGE and thinking he had plenty of time – for a 9.30 start!

We had a leisurely break as it was early, and with our group now being 18, we set off at a slower pace, just after 10.30. There were only a couple of fishermen on the Yarra at Newport today and a few people out walking their dogs.
We stopped for a break at the Williamstown Information Centre and saw a group of children from the nearby Newmark PS walk across to the park for a lesson.
I was intrigued by the Wilkinson Memorial Drinking Fountain which had been there since 1875. The inscription below stated that: *Rev George Wilkinson of Holy Trinity Church was a teetotaller and a homeopathic doctor. Public Subscriptions in 1876 purchased this Glasgow-built fountain to dispense pure water for ferry passengers at the 'Front Door to Williamstown'.*
Arriving at the covered picnic tables and finding them free, we began our very early lunch at 11.20. A social time was had by all as we chatted over lunch and caught up with people we hadn't seen for a while. By midday, we were ready to climb back on our bikes and head towards Newport via the wetlands.

In Maddox Road, we crossed to the left of the road as directed by signage and then noticed a detour preventing our normal right turn, after the train tracks. Shortly after we were on our way, pedaling towards Newport and walking under the station, where Michael informed me that George had left. We rode to the end of Hall Street, past Spotswood Station where we saw a new bike path. Glenys took the lead again to direct us back to Francis Street. We paused several times so the riders at the back could rejoin the group.
From Footscray, we rode down Dynon Road and eventually Arden Street North Melbourne, up to Abbotsford Street where we turned left into the bike lane and cycled up to the Children's Hospital.
Time to remove my jacket and have a drink before the final hill. Wolter reported that 3 people had scratches on their legs, Ian wondered how I had kept my jacket on so long and Sue told us she would turn for home halfway up the hill. Wolter directed me where to turn to reach Gatehouse Street and soon after noticed me riding on the footpath, when I should have been in the bike lane – black mark for this leader!!
A few people kept going home, while 10 of us stopped at District 35 for a welcome warm drink or iced coffee and more enjoyable conversation.

Thanks to Pam, Paul, Jan, James, Jon, Roger, Glenys, George, Michael, Sue, Mick, Jopie, Bob, Wolter, Ian, Steve and Ralph for joining me today.
It was a very pleasant ride of 50km.

Report by Nola

HALF MOON BAY – FISH-N-CHIP RIDE
12 FEBRUARY

A different day and a very different (from earlier in the week) bay. Fourteen riders showed up at Jika Jika despite the fresh winds. We took the Capital City Trail and scooted around Jeff's Shed to get to the Port Melbourne rotunda (which seemed like a better idea than the new St Kilda pier in the wind) for morning tea, then we turned on the Bay Trail and into the wind and pedalled hard to reach an average speed of 10kph. I enjoyed drafting behind Michael B. It felt as if we were riding along a wild Scottish coastline with the wind, mist and white caps on the grey water. Every tree was a welcome windbreak and we felt the force of the headwind when we were exposed.
I stopped regularly to check whether the group wanted to continue. "There are other places to get fish and chips! We don't have to ride all the way to Blackrock." But each time the consensus was to continue and eventually we caught sight of the wreck of the Cerberus offshore.
We swooped down the hill (except George who didn't trust his brakes) and found Michael and Ian were already ordering their lunch from the Beach house kiosk. The verdict was that lunch was pretty average. In addition, we had to hold on to our chips not so much to fend off the seagulls but so they didn't blow away.

The sun came out but no one was tempted to swim. For Kate and Bob it was their first visit to this pretty bay beach with its red cliffs in the distance. One of the best moments of the day was being blown up the steep entry road and then flying along the Bay Trail at twice the speed we had progressed earlier.
Some riders took the train from Sandringham and others from Flinders Street but most of us continued to South of Johnson for afternoon tea. It took a bit of convincing for the staff to allow us to order inside so we could pay individually but eventually we all did and enjoyed some time in the sun before dispersing to our homes.

Report by Kathleen

YARRA RIVER WITH VRIATIONS
17 FEBRUARY

This ride was intended to be Yarra & Westgate with Variations, about 52km. but with a dastardly forecast of 37 degrees I scaled it back to simply Yarra with Variations, about 29km. I didn't expect a big group and accordingly a group of 7 heroes/diehards/fools turned up at Jika Jika. We crossed the Yarra 10 times as promised as well as Merri Creek 3 times. In addition we crossed over train lines twice, under train lines twice, over freeways once and under freeways twice. Phew!

Morning tea was at Kevin Baretlett Reserve in Richmond, thankfully in the shade. It all went rather well despite some sharp short uphills that tested both battery power and leg power. Pedalling northwards into a stiff northerly to get home was a bit of an effort but everyone coped well. We got back to Jika Jika at 11.45 by which time it had just hit 30 so not that bad. The grapes and watermelon offered to us at Jika Jika were most welcome and gratefully accepted.
I'd like to suggest that on days with a forecast of 35 degrees or more we default to an 8am start at Jika Jika for a shorter ad hoc ride, which might be just a shortened version of the planned ride if it is feasible and the leader is happy to do this or a totally different ride. An email a day or so before could confirm the earlier start.

Report by Jopie

HURSTBRIDGE TRAIN AND DIAMOND CREEK TRAIL RIDE
19 FEBRUARY

It’s never a good start to a ride when the train runs late but eventually our caboose made its appearance at Westgarth station and we all headed off to Hurstbridge.
After an arduous 200m of riding from Hurstbridge Station we stopped for morning tea in Langan’s Foodstore. Service seemed a bit slow to begin with but it gathered steam and we were all caffeinated and on our bikes before we knew it.
As we pedalled we indulged in forest bathing along the gorgeous Diamond Creek Trail. Many large eucalypts were doing what they do best - surviving despite the lack of rain and the scorching temperatures we have all experienced this summer. We enjoyed our largely downhill pedal along this flowing path.
At some point we were joined by Graeme S who had ridden out from Darebin to meet us and then continued on the ride with us.
Lunch was partaken of at Westerfolds at the very spacious picnic shelter uphill from the canoe club shed (and public toilets).

After lunch we avoided a few hills along the Yarra River in Templestowe by taking the gravel path to the north of Odyssey House. We rejoined the Yarra Trail and rode until we had to detour from it at Warringal Parklands to avoid the big sink hole associated with the NEL tunnel boring.
One last pit stop at Warringal Parklands then onwards to afternoon tea at the ever reliable Area 52 café in Alphington. Safely refuelled we headed homewards.
Thanks to our whips, Graham and Colin, and to Bob, David x 3, Graeme S, Ian H, James, Kathleen, Ken, Michael, Roger and Steve & Steph and Vangel for coming!
Especial thanks to Steph for applying the contents of the 1st aid kit onto Roger's somewhat bloodied limbs - following a parting from his bike on a very awkward corner.

Report by Gael

HADFIELD – GEORGE'S 90TH BIRTHDAY RIDE
24 FEBRUARY

The excitement had been building for some time. Graphic designer Mike B had created a flyer, Jopie had bought a card, Ed and Jenny had created a trophy, someone had looked up where Hadfield was … all for George Bailey's 90 th birthday ride. It's not every day someone in the Darebin BUG turns 90 and we were about to have two of them.
There were 28 mid-week and Saturday riders ready to go when the special starting time of 9.30am rolled around at Jika Jika. Just as well they've taken the fence down. One commuting cyclist even stopped to ask what the hell was going on.
Twenty-eight is a lot of people in one riding group and would normally require a police escort. Fortunately, some group-ride guidelines had been sent out recently and the first aid kit that Gael and Graham had freshened up in time for the possible mayhem was not required.
George took us due west to Park Street and the Moonee Ponds Creek Trail, cunningly avoiding the zig-zag down to that creek's concrete canal from Union Street, on which several riders young than him struggle.
What followed included bits of George's famous Three Creeks and a River ride through Pascoe Vale and up the Westbreen Creek Trail, which has changed a lot over the years that he has been leading rides. George knows a fair bit of Melbourne's trail network from his last 30 years of riding and revealed once that he'd thrown out all his notes and maps as he didn't need them anymore. The state archives must be furious!
We arrived at George's Hadfield home shortly after the promised time of 11am and there, parked out front, was the famous motorhome that he and his late wife had travelled the country in and intriguing Jeep Cherokee with jockey wheel platform on the back. The group's bikes all squeezed around the back to avoid lowering the tone of the neighbourhood. There were already a few stalwarts from the early days of the BUG there. People like Nerolie and Ray who were involved when local government consulted riding groups about infrastructure projects. There was plenty of food and drink laid out by George's family in the shelter at the back of the house and morning tea sort of rolled into lunch, interspersed with a brief downpour that forced people to get a bit closer to each other. The noise was deafening, and that was just the conversations.
With the arrival of the cake came some short speeches, during which it was noted how much George loved tinkering with bikes and riding with the BUG. He even built a two-wheel-drive e-bike out of stuff he had lying around. Now you can buy them.
Then came the bicycle trophy made by Ed and Jenny. George takes things a bit easier these days but always has a ready smile and lets ride leaders know when he needs a breather or wants to catch a train home.

He let son John do the talking for him but did say we'd have to put up with him for a while longer. Maybe he'll start doing some Saturday rides with David D, who's just a few months older than him. George had promised to make sure we all left Hadfield at an appropriate hour but was still pressing the flesh so I said my goodbyes and somehow ended up with six people behind me. A torrential downpour came just after I got in the garage so hopefully no one got soaked.

Report by Wolter

WARRANDYTE – POUND BEND RESERVE
26 FEBRUARY

Second time ride, and with a good ride day with the morning slightly overcast. Starting off on the other side of the Westgarth station from normal, to catch the train to Eltham.
We rode over to the Main Yarra Trail & onto Petty's Orchard café for morning lattes and a few apple slices. It was less busy than last time.
Then onto Beasleys Nursery via the Mullum Mullum trail. Then the hill climbing began with a large hill to traverse over to pound bend state park. Going up this side isn't too bad as it's gradual with a few breaks on the way up. The hill descending into the park is also a steep descent down to the river. A certain red Cecil Walker bike may have broken the bicycle land speed record on the way down!

Lunch in the park by the river was certainly peaceful, except for the three busloads of schoolchildren luckily all down by the tunnel exit. However, we have to return back over the hill but with a steeper climb! Fortunately there are some quiet back streets! We tried a more gentle route but still it's quite a climb and I walked the last part.
Then back to Jika Jika via the normal Yarra trail.

Report by Jon