

This Week with the Ghostriders



THE WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GHOSTRIDERS

What's News ?

Last Thursday we had one of the most enjoyable rides that I can remember on the Warby Trail. Not only did we have a bumper turnout of riders (including a couple that we had not seen on the trail for a long time) but the entire ride was conducted in a most cohesive and cooperative manner.

One of the highlights was meeting up with a large group of fellow cyclists from the Whitehorse Cycling Club. This gave us a combined peloton that was large enough to be seen from outer space and a few minutes to share our cycling experiences.

It is always a thrill to welcome new Ghostriders and last Thursday also gave us the chance to officially recognise **Sonja Fischer** as Ghost rider number 93. Sonja only discovered our group through a chance meeting at

COGS three weeks ago. At first she was a little timid about joining us on the trail but she has not missed a ride since that time.

Sonja is now a very important part of our Thursday rides and she is also the proud owner of a brand new bike. Since she is another German speaker her language skills will be greatly appreciated on our proposed "Danube Ride Pt 2" next year. We all wish her Many Happy Rides and Adventures in the years ahead.

This week we have a larger than usual number of news items, updates and stories to share with you so it looks like this will be our biggest newsletter ever. You better grab a cup of coffee and make yourself comfortable for a few minutes.

Next weekend (April 16th to 18th) is our Annual expedition to ride the Wangaratta to Bright Rail Trail. I have been promoting this ride for

many weeks but it is now almost upon us. I am really looking forward to a fun weekend of riding and fellowship in the Australian countryside. Later in this newsletter is some important practical information about arrangements for this ride.

Last Saturday **Kevin Henley** and **Mike Litchfield** headed off to Kathmandu to start their attempt at being the oldest riders to ever complete the Lhasa to Kathmandu ride across the Tibetan Plateau. I am sure they will have some amazing stories to tell when (or if) they return.

A few days ago I had a call from the producers of the TV show to update me on the progress that had been made. Apparently editing is now well underway and they are very pleased with the way that it is shaping up. They requested some more still images of the Ghostriders on the Warburton trail and that is why I had the camera with me during last Thursday's ride.

Coming Rides & Other News

Sunday April 11th—Paris Roubaix Live TV Coverage
Come watch the race live on the big screen at my place. BYO drinks and nibbles from 8 pm. RSVP please.

**Thursday April 15th
Regular Warby Trail Ride**
starting from Woori Yallock at 11.15 am or 12 noon, COGS at 1.00 pm or Woori Yallock at 1.40 pm.

**April 16th to 18th
Wangaratta To Bright Rail Trail (also see following page for more info)**

Join in the fun when we ride one of the best rail trails in Australia. It's sealed all the

way so you can bring any type of bike. You will need to book your accommodation without delay

**Monday April 26th
Anzac Day Ride
Great Southern Rail Trail**

This has become something of an Anzac Day tradition and I would like to invite you all to join us in some delightful Gippsland riding along the Great Southern Rail Trail from Meenyan to Foster and back. 10 am start at Meenyan. Best suited to mountain bikes or hybrids.

**Thursday April 29th
Warby Trail Breakfast Ride
7.00 am start at Wandin**

Our plan is to ride from Wandin to Milgrove before returning for breakfast at the Carriage Café. Bookings are required in order to get the "special menu". This will take the place of the regular afternoon ride on this day.

Other News

Gerry Driessen is continuing to make steady progress after his double knee replacements. He is apparently free of pain and is back at work again. I am hoping it won't be too much longer before he can make his long awaited debut ride with the Ghostriders.

Monday April 12th

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I realized that, although I have 1000s of pictures of Ghostriders all over the world, I don't have a lot taken on the Warby Trail itself. If anyone else has good images of our Thursday rides they could email a couple to me for use on the website or in the newsletters.

Regular Thursday Ride Details

Each Thursday we conduct rides along the Warburton Trail. Visitors are always welcome to join us. There are several alternate start times and meeting points to choose from.

11.15 am Early Starters—Meet at Woori Yallock and ride the full trail down to Lilydale before meeting the second group at COGS at 1.00 pm.

12 noon Main Group—Meet at Woori Yallock and ride to COGS at Mt Evelyn to meet with the rest at 1.00 pm.

1.00 pm COGS Group leave and ride as a combined group to Woori Yallock where we usually arrive at about 1.40 pm.

1.50 pm Woori Yallock leave for the ride to Milgrove where we stop for lunch before the ride back to your start point.

In this way all riders can choose a starting time and ride distance to suit their level of bike fitness. On the leg between COGS and Milgrove we expect all riders to stay together as much as possible (ie no bolting).

It is also great that **Gael** has been able to alter her work arrangements so that she can once again join us on the Thursday rides.

I also had a chat with **Helen Riethof** and she informed me that her husband **John** is now in remission. This is most encouraging news after the very difficult past year they have gone through. Our thoughts are with them both.

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Weekend at Wang—More Info

This coming weekend is the time our riders head north to complete an extended ride from **Wangaratta to Bright** along the most famous rail trail in Australia.

The normal arrangements are that everyone drive up on Friday afternoon and stay overnight in Wang. If you are able to get away early we would like to share a meal together (at about 7 pm). I know that some may not be able to get away from work early enough to join us. At this stage I need to know how many places to reserve for dinner so if you want to eat with us, please ring me to let me know.

On Saturday morning we will be heading off at about 8.30 am to ride along the trail to Everton Station (about 25 km from Wang). Here we will stop for a short break and

drink before tackling the climb up to Beechworth. This section is not very steep but it does continue for quite a distance so you do have a good excuse for a cake at the bakery when you reach the top.

After morning tea it's an exhilarating descent back down to Everton where we turn left and head on to Myrtleford for lunch in the park. After lunch it's a relatively flat 30 km or so to Bright. This part is exceptionally pretty, especially the final couple of km into Bright.

After a shower and a change of clothes we adjourn to the courtyard for a chat. By 6.30 pm we will be starving so its time for dinner.

On Sunday most riders will be riding back to Wang to complete the double transit

of the trail. For those without a support vehicle to accompany them to Bright it will be important to pack very lightly for the Saturday night as it is possible you will need to carry it back with you on the bike. I still don't know exactly how many cars we might have for the return leg so you had better come prepared.

If you have a small pannier to take with you that might solve the problem.

Maggie and I will not be returning to Wang but continuing past Bright to go over the top to Omeo and Lakes Entrance therefore we will not be available for return luggage transfer, although I am hopeful that at least 1 other car will be there.

Future Overseas Adventure Challenges

Arrangements for our South America Adventure Challenge are now finalised. This will easily be our longest and most ambitious overseas challenge yet, combining a variety of cycling and trekking experiences in Peru, Argentina and Uruguay. In the process we will be cycling some of the highest roads on earth and also completing the fabled Inca Trail to Machu Picchu. This has been a dream of mine for many years and it is fantastic to be able to share it with such great friends and fellow travellers.

By the end of this year approximately 100 people will have taken part in one or more of our overseas challenges. It is

not only the perfect way to explore a foreign country but it is also the best way to learn about yourself at the same time.

I am now in the early stages of planning for 2011 and would invite any of our readers to join me on our journeys of discovery.

Even at this early stage it is looking like we will definitely be doing a **"Danube Ride Part 2"** in August/September. This is certain to fill quickly so if you are interested in being a part of it I would advise you to let me know without delay.

Watch out for other updates in the weeks ahead.

Picture of the Week



A massed conjunction of cyclists at Launching Place—April 8th 2010.

Believe it or not, there were actually many others that were not in the picture.



A Ride Story from Geoff James

As Easter Sunday 2010 dawned I woke up to the radio and rather than cursing a chance to sleep in I waited for the day's weather forecast and the announcer said 25 degrees C and slight winds for the east of Melbourne. I was in luck. Perfect weather for today's Ghost rider's Buxton Eildon ride.

No time for Easter eggs this morning. Time only to load the bike onto the car, have a quick shower, breakfast and to say goodbye to the family. The day had begun.

As I drove up the Maroondah highway heading east towards Healesville the remnants of the early morning mist and the weak sunlight gave the countryside a lovely soft feel. It was with some trepidation that I drove towards the Black Spur as I had not driven this way since Black Saturday and I really did not know how badly it had been burnt. It is one of my favourite places in Victoria with its towering mountain ash and an understory of lush tree ferns.

Whilst signs of fire were clearly visible the Spur itself was not as bad as I feared. The damage was more noticeable especially along the ridges as I drove through Narbethong and approached Buxton.

At Buxton I sighted the yellow jerseys and bikes of fellow ghost riders which bought a smile to my eyes and shortly after 9am nine of us departed Buxton and headed up the Maroondah highway towards Taggerty. A relatively flat section of 11km to warm the legs up. Open farmland with some burnt trees and forest on the left and the magnificent Cathed-

ral ranges on the right. The air was clear and cool and the views were magnificent.

Taggerty came and went and we knew that the legs would have to work a little harder as Wyle's Hill and the Acheron Cutting loomed over the next 10 kms. Not to worry it was a day made for riding. By this stage the ghost riders were strung out at their own pace working into a nice rhythm for the days long ride. Finally the top of the Acheron Cutting was reached and a quick rest at the top to savour the view and take some photos was in order. Behind me was Cathedral Range. To the right was the Goulburn River Valley and ahead of us was a lovely downhill section of undulating farmland for several kilometres heading across the Goulburn River and into Alexandra.

As I headed into Alexandra knowing that riders were both ahead of me and behind me I saw a sign saying there was a local art show. A bit of culture seemed in order so I dropped into the Alexandra hall and quickly looked at a range of local artists work. The highlight being several paintings by 2 painters who were father and son. I bought a slice of genuine home made country fruitcake (to build up my energy) and it was absolutely perfect. A very nice stop.

At the Alexandra café Peter Warren was about to come looking for me. During my cultural sojourn the tail of the ride had passed me and everyone was relaxing in the sun having coffee and morning tea.

As we headed off along the Goulburn Valley highway towards Eildon I rode with Hank and John Bird. Hank said he had a brother in law

who lived at Thornton very close to the highway. We decided to drop in and spread some ghost rider cheer. My cultural interlude had not yet ended. The artists whose work I had admired in Alexandra turned out to be none other than the people we were visiting. It appears that Hank's family are very gifted with paint brushes. However Hank readily admits his artistic skills lie in painting decks and timber rather than landscapes and birdlife.

After meeting Hank's relations and a quick tour of their beautiful hand built mud brick house located on the banks of the Goulburn River. We headed off to Eildon and lunch. The sun was shining; we had a slight breeze to cool us down and no hills of any note, only sweeping bends and not much traffic. But Bob's rear tyre decided it was time for him to have a rest and punctured after hitting a stone. As we replaced his inner tube along rode none other than the King of the Trail, Jon Bates. Our numbers had swelled to ten. Jon had missed the start and commenced riding at Alexandra determined not to miss the ride. A very wise decision.

With rumbling stomachs we all met up again in Eildon along with Joan and Ann. Sitting by the lawns having lunch together was delightful. The weather was perfect. We rode out of Eildon along the back road to Thornton with the sprinters taking advantage of the 12 kilometres of river flats and no headwinds. The 3 G's, Gail, Glenda and Geoff bought up the rear taking in the ambience of the Goulburn River and surrounding hills knowing that Tortoises can beat the Hares.

At Thornton we all met up again. John and Hank left early to get to another commitment and the remaining eight of us headed up the Taggerty Thornton Road. We

had a 13km ride to reach Taggerty. The Peloton spread again out as each rider tackled a long but manageable climb. On reaching the crest there were some views but best of all several kilometres of downhill bitumen lay ahead of us and then a relatively flat ride of 11km's to Buxton.

As we headed back to Buxton along the Maroondah highway the sun was getting a little lower in the afternoon sky and the Cathedral Ranges on our left were drenched in soft late afternoon sunshine. They were a wonderful backdrop to finish off our ride.

Not to be denied the cycling gods still had one trick up their sleeve. Riding around a bend we saw Bob's yellow road bike upside down once again; with Bob standing next to it, rear wheel in hand and a despondent look on his face. He had scored his second rear puncture for the day. Fortunately spare tubes were aplenty from other riders and Bob was back on the road in short order.

After no further adventures we rode into the Buxton car park at 4pm and met Joan and Ann who had a welcoming thermos and some home made biscuits. A great way to relax at the end of the day. We had ridden around 95km's with numerous breaks and had managed an average speed of 25kph. Everyone was in great spirits.

All in all, a great day:- perfect riding, good food and some added culture. A day we will all remember fondly for years to come. Around 70% of the roads had nice wide shoulders for added safety to us cyclists and the road surfaces were pretty good too. Thanks to all riders who made this such an enjoyable day including Bernie and Steve who haven't had a mention yet!

A special thanks to Peter for being ride convenor and to Joan and Ann for afternoon tea and being the support team.

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Photo Gallery— Buxton Ride

