

This Week with the Ghostriders



THE WEEKLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GHOSTRIDERS

What's News ?

For the past decade or so we seem to have experienced a succession of "Indian Summers" rather than the genuine old style Melbourne Winter. While this has been very kind to those of us who enjoy riding our bikes, it has done little for the state of our water supply.

According to a feeling in my rapidly ageing bones I suspect that this cycle may be coming to an end. If the past couple of Thursdays are any indication, we may be coming into the coldest and wettest winter we have had for some time.

It has been an unfamiliar sight to see our home trail transformed into something approaching one long mud puddle. In spite of the inclement conditions it has still been encouraging to see that we have still been able to raise a peloton of dedicated riders.

Although it is harder to overcome the inertia to get out the bike and confront the elements head on, once you are actually underway it is really not so bad. The most important aspect is to

make sure you have adequate clothing to withstand the cold.

Last Monday we had perhaps our most successful ever Queens Birthday Ride. Although it was a cold start, the sun shone brightly for most of the day and we ended up with no fewer than 26 participants. All agreed that it was the perfect way to spend a public holiday. It was good to so many of our newer riders completing this ride for the first time, although a little disappointing that some of our most experienced riders were missing on the day.

Later in this newsletter I have an article written by one of our newest riders, giving his impressions of the Queens Birthday Ride. I have also included an update on the progress of some of our adventurers.

Tuesday Morning Group Now Underway

For the past few weeks I have been mentioning a new Tuesday morning group. The plans for this group have been evolving a little to the point where I have decided to make it a walking/cycling group.

For most weeks the Tuesday

group will complete a brisk and very scenic walk, starting from my place at 10 am sharp. On the first Tuesday of each month it will become a cycling activity where we ride the trail from Emerald to Cockatoo and back again. The walks and rides are open to anyone who wants to improve their fitness and make some new friends. The next walk will take place on **Tues 22nd June**. For more information give me a call on 5968 3307.

Retro Ride—Sat July 3rd Children's Hospital Charity Fundraiser

Our next major weekend ride will take the form of a special "Retro Ride". This will also be a **charity fundraiser ride for The Children's Hospital**. The plan is to wind the clock back a few years to our cycling roots. The idea is that you get your oldest or cheapest bike (if you have one) and dress in the type of gear that you wore to your first ride. Old trackie dacks, jeans, T shirts, jumpers, tennis shoes?

The point would not only be to remind us how far we have come, but also to have a bit of a chuckle at the same time. Each rider would pay \$5 to be a part of it but any rider not entering into the retro spirit would pay double as a fine. I would encourage all our riders to partici-

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pate and also invite along a few friends. I would like to be able to raise at least \$100 or more for the charity.

The date that has been set aside for this ride is **Sat July 3rd**. This will be a Jells Park to Carrum Ride. We will be starting from the Jells Park Kiosk at 10 am and riding along the Dandenong Creek Bike Path. This is a very flat route and suitable for just about all riders.

Another date for your diaries is **Sat 17th July**. This date has been set aside for our **Annual Mid Winter Dinner**, but we still need a person (or persons) to take on the organization—see below.

Tuesday Morning Fitness Group

Each Tuesday you are invited to join us for a brisk and scenic walk around the tracks of Emerald. Each walk starts at 10 am and is finished soon after 11 am. On the first Tuesday of each month we have a bike ride, instead of a walk. For more details give me a call on 5968 3307.

Everyone is invited to participate.

Upcoming Rides & Activities

Tues June 22nd—Walking Group
Starts from 33 Emerald Lake Rd at 10 am sharp

Thurs June 24th—Warby Trail Ride

Start at Woori Yallock at 12 noon or COGS at 1.00 pm or Woori Yallock at 1.40 pm.

Tues June 29th—Walking Group
Starts from 33 Emerald Lake Rd at 10 am sharp

Thurs July 1st—Warby Trail Ride
Start at Woori Yallock at 12 noon or COGS at 1.00 pm or Woori Yallock at 1.40 pm. First Thursday of the month means lunch in Warburton rather than Milgrove.

Sat July 3rd—RETRO RIDE
10 am start
Jells Park Kiosk to Carrum and back. Charity fundraiser ride for Oxfam.

Sat July 17th—Midwinter Dinner & Social Evening
In the previous newsletter I invited applicants to volunteer for the job of coordinating this year's Midwinter Dinner. So far no one has "stepped up to the plate" (pardon the pun) to take on this role. It is not a difficult job but it does involve choosing a venue and arranging bookings. Unfortunately the salary is zero and it is a rather thankless job but unless someone takes it on we will not have a dinner at all. Can I encourage you all to reconsider and hopefully we will get a couple of volunteers ?

Advance Notice Sunday July 25th—Beach Rd Ride

The previous Beach Rd ride was cancelled because of poor weather so hopefully we will get better conditions this time. The plan is to ride from the end of North Rd down to Mornington for lunch. The ride will commence at 9.00 am.

This is a great experience for those who enjoy riding on smooth roads with lots of other fellow riders. The total distance will be about 90 km so it is not suited for beginners.

Regular Thursday Ride Details

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

11.10 am Early Group—Meet at Woori Yallock and ride the full distance 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 start the return ride 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 all riders re-group for the ride to Milgrove where we stop for lunch before the ride back to your chosen 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



The Queen's Birthday Ride A Personal Perspective By David McMorran

After branching away from the Eastern Freeway and a short creek trail, our ride last Monday took us along the route of the former Outer Circle Railway line, built in 1891. This line created a link from Oakleigh through rural countryside to Fairfield, connecting with the former Inner Circle Railway through North Fitzroy and Royal Park and eventually on to Spencer St.

The intention was for this to be the path for freight and passenger traffic from the "new" Gippsland line, avoiding the privately owned railway between South Yarra and Flinders St and the gap between Flinders St and Spencer St stations. The government bought the Melbourne and Hobson's Bay United Railway Company in 1878, before this rail line was constructed but still built it about 10 years later, completing in 1891.

The low level of patronage between Fairfield and Camberwell line led to this section's closure just two years later. A passenger service resumed between Deepdene and Ashburton in 1900 later becoming the Alamein line south of East Camberwell. A freight service ran to East Kew until 1943, mainly supplying the wood yard at the corner of High St and Harp Rd.

The old McMorran family home was about 200m from the wood yard and the Harp Hotel across the road, with the old rail line providing a great play area for those too young to patronise the hotel. Except for a hiatus of about 7 years shortly after getting married and starting a family, my dad lived there from birth in the front bedroom until aged about 70 and now lives in Boronia.

In his early years, he used to push the freight wagons across Normanby Rd, whether they needed it or not. By the time the family returned and it was yours truly's turn to explore the area, the railway was long gone but the cutting beside the wood yard provided a fantastic rock climbing experience, further enhanced knowing this was against parental directive and without the obligatory safety harnesses used when climbing the plastic rocks of today.

The cutting was filled in long ago and the area now taken over by cyclists and pooches.

Thanks to David for his maiden literary contribution.



Some of the Queens Birthday peloton—the full group consisted of no less than 26 participants. Picture taken by Lisa Barstow.



Remounting after morning tea at Ivanhoe Golf Club Queens Birthday Ride

Mt St Leonard Climb Sat June 19th

On Sat June 19th seven participants completed the challenging climb from Donnellys Weir to the summit tower on Mt St Leonard (1080m). The weather conditions were absolutely perfect for strenuous walking and everyone had a most enjoyable day in the Australian bush.

Much of this area was badly affected by the Black Saturday bushfires but it was encouraging to see how well it has recovered.

The track from Donnellys Weir starts at a moderate but consistent upward gradient and continues to

the first ridgeline. From there it undulates up and down until the final couple of km to the summit. At that point the gradient sharply kicks up to 30% or more making it a taxing scramble over slippery and uneven ground.

By the time we reached the dirt road near the top I think everyone's heart was pumping away rapidly, providing ample evidence that walking can be every bit as strenuous as the hardest bike ride.

Thanks to Linda for being our guide and to all those who helped make the day so enjoyable.



*Some of our climbers gathered at the summit of Mt St Leonard (1080 metres) - Sat June 19th
We now have only two more scheduled training exercises before we leave for The Andes Mountains of Peru.*

This Week with the Ghostriders



A Word About Our Wanderers

Over the past couple of months we have had Ghostriders scattered far and wide across Australia and overseas. I would like to bring you up to date with their current status.

Glenda Wise has been continuing her epic ride double crossing the Nullarbour. Although I think her original plan was to stop at Port Augusta, she has got up such a head of steam that she just can't get off the bike.

She has now continued on to Mildura, then on to Ouyen and Swan Hill. Each day she is covering about 120 km and has completed over 2600 km in total. She is now planning to reach the 3000 km mark on the second anniversary of her brother's death. What a tremendous testimonial!

I was planning to use our Retro Ride of July 3rd as a fundraiser for Oxfam but I have now changed this to the Royal Children's Hospital. We can add whatever we raise on July 3rd to Glenda's Fundraising for the kids.

I am sure that Glenda will have some amazing stories to share with us when she finally gets back.

Bob Andrews has been trekking in the far north of Western Australia for the past month as part of his preparation for our coming South America Trip. He is due back in Melbourne before the end of June.

Tom and Margaret Partel are now on their annual migration north to enjoy the winter sun-

shine of the northern states. I believe they will be away for the next 4 months or so.

John and Kerry Dawson are now safely back in Melbourne after their extended trip through the Middle East. I understand they had some "interesting" experiences.

"Mega" Mike Litchfield is now back from the Himalaya and has posted a short video of his trip on Youtube. Just log onto to Youtube and search for movies from *litchy76* and you should be able to view it, along with some of his other video masterpieces.

And in case any of the readers are getting itchy feet for an adventure of their own we have a couple of new cycling adventures already under development. In Aug/Sep of 2011 we will be heading back to Europe for a 1100 km bike ride along

the Danube and Elbe rivers (Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic). This trip is now mostly booked out but we still have about 4 vacancies remaining for anyone interested.

I am also in the early stages of developing a new ride in the Chinese Himalaya. Already I have several people who have requested to be kept informed of future developments regarding this ride. If you would also like to be kept up to date, just drop me a line.

Like most things in life, every adventure always starts with a dream, then gradually that dream becomes a reality. Unless you take that first step then you will always be just a spectator.

"If you Think You Can't then you Won't".

Who are the Ghostriders ?

Approximately once a year I include a brief history of the Ghostriders in our weekly newsletter. This is mainly for the benefit of those newer riders who have joined us over the past twelve months and may not fully realise what the background and structure of our group is all about. Since it has been about twelve months since this was last included I thought it could be of interest to some of our readers.

Who are The Ghostriders ?

The origins of our group began in 2002 with four friends (myself, John Seamons, Bob Lewis and Mal Doswell) riding the Warburton Trail each Thursday afternoon. The name "Ghostriders" came as a result of a pair of large speakers that John decided to attach to his bike one week. When he pressed the button the speakers emitted an amplified electronic version of a train whistle. When people asked what the sound was, we replied that it was the "Ghost Train" and hence we christened ourselves the "Ghostriders". The name has stuck ever since.

Since then the word started to spread and other people chose to share our rides with us. Early in the

piece I registered the domain name and started documenting our rides and experiences on our own web site.

The group was never intended to be a formal cycling club, but rather a group of close friends that enjoyed spending time together. We have never charged any fees and I have never wanted to become bogged down in officialdom.

Each person that chooses to ride with us does so because they enjoy our company and agree with our rather light hearted stance on most matters.

In the past the expenses of maintaining the web site, web hosting, phone calls, purchasing items for the rides, etc has been partially subsidized by limited sponsorship from a small number of companies. At the current time we have no sponsorship and all expenses are paid from my own pocket. If you know of any business that would be able to supply some support in return for advertising I would be very grateful.

Of course the continued well being of the group relies on all our riders being supportive of each other and the group as a whole. If any rider is not able to

contribute in a positive manner I would encourage them to seek out another group that would better meet their needs. We all need to remember that riding in our peloton is a privilege not a right.

All those who do join us for a ride do so entirely at their own risk. We have always expected all our riders to wear helmets, to obey all road rules and behave in a safe and responsible manner at all times. We also encourage all riders to be a member of Bicycle Victoria.

Somewhere along the way we decided that it would be nice to have a jersey of our own and hence the first version of the Ghost rider jersey was born. In order to wear the jersey, all we ask is that any rider complete at least 4 rides with the group in a six month period and be in agreement with our cycling philosophy and style. Over the past few years we have had almost 100 people who have asked to be recognised as a Ghost rider.

Another, more recent, aspect of the Ghostriders has been the introduction of the **Overseas Adventure Challenges**. I have had a long interest in adventure type travel, and when the opportunity came to combine my love of adventure travel with cycling, I asked around to see if anyone else would be interested in joining me

on a trip to China in 2006. Little did I know just how dramatic the response would be. This has now led to three rides in China, followed by an amazing Himalayan Adventure. In 2009 19 riders completed a two week ride along the Danube from Germany to Hungary. Our next adventure will see a group of Ghostriders tackle a combination cycling/trekking challenge in the Andes of Peru.

By the end of this year almost 100 people will have participated in one or more of these trips. Another trip to Europe is now finalised for Aug/Sep of 2011 and a future Himalaya trip is under development. These trips are open to everyone with a spirit of adventure and a desire to not grow old full of regrets.

The most recent development within the group has been the start of the **Tuesday morning Fitness Group**, involving walking and cycling activities. .

I don't know what lies ahead for the Ghostriders, but I do hope that you gain fun and enjoyment (and maybe a little better health) by sharing some of your time and energy with us. It is always encouraging when people tell me just important the group has become to them. I certainly count myself privileged to share time on the bike with you all.