

## **Bobbin Head Classic**

### **(“Mad Dogs and Englishmen Ride out in the Morning Heat”)**

The Bobbin Head Classic, also affectionately known as “the Bobbo”, is Sydney’s premier community cycle ride and it starts in Trotters’ very own back yard at Turramurra Memorial Park. So, it was only to be expected that this would attract a strong following from the Turramurra Treadlers (Trotters who cycle) with nine participating in the event held on Sunday, March 25<sup>th</sup>. Now in its seventh year, this is the Rotary major fund-raising event for the North Shore, the main beneficiary being Lifeline. There were 2,468 entrants, the majority of whom rode the 104km ride. There are 9 Treadlers stories of the experience for the day - This is mine.

Nick Swan and I decided to ride together and met at my place before 6.00am and cycled to the start at Karuah Road. There we were met by a palette of colour with a vast number of fellow cyclists (what is the word for a gathering of cyclists?) all with brightly flashing lights and sporting their multi-coloured cycling gear. There was quite a buzz and an air of excitement. Despite the crowd, Fergus Dixon and others from the “Flash Harrys”, my week day ride group, came across us and so we were all able to start together.

It was a lovely morning but the forecast was for the temperature to rise into the 30s so we were keen to start and beat the heat as much as possible. We were released in waves from 6.30am and headed off in convoy up Eastern Road weaving in and out of the traffic, quite a challenge given the large number of riders. Our route took us left into Burns Road where everyone was forced to halt at the Stop sign at Grosvenor Road by a nice Policeman who advised that the Stop sign meant Stop! Imagine repeating that nearly 2,500 times! You can now be sure that the police force is only interested in our well-being!

That lesson successfully completed, we continued onto to Hornsby via Wahroonga and Waitara. Then up the Pacific Highway before turning right at the Mt Colah rail bridge. The cyclists had now started to thin out so we were able to stretch out a bit and lift the pace as the sun began to peek over the horizon.

It was not long before we were in familiar territory riding on Ku-Ring-Gai Chase Road heading for Kalkari and the Bobbin Head descent. Nick and I had agreed to take turns leading – the classic peleton -which turned out to be a bit tricky because of the large number of cyclists. Our knowledge of the descent from Kalkari to the bridge at Bobbin Head helped us as we overtook many of the less experienced cyclists.

The only timed portion of the Bobbo is the ride from the Bobbin Head bridge to the North Turramurra entrance to the park described as the King of the Mountain, a distance of 4km. We could have decided to put the foot down but mindful that we still had many kilometers to go, we were careful to pace ourselves. Nick, who I had left behind on the descent, caught up about 3km up the climb and led the way to the top. We later found out that David Giltrap’s time for this section was about 9 minutes placing him 47<sup>th</sup>. What does that guy eat to ride that fast?!

At Burns Road, for safety reasons, we were made to ride along the narrow footpath rather than the road, probably sensible with so many riders of varying standards, before weaving our way through the back streets of St Ives until reaching Mona Vale Road. At last, with a relatively open and flat road, we

were able to lift the tempo and get spinning. Turning left at Belrose, we rode past the German School and up the climb to Terrey Hills. I was starting to look forward to our first stop.

The road out to Duffys Forest is undulating and bumpy and the hills steep. Our final climb to our first drinks station was a killer but salvation was at hand with a drink, an energy bar and a short rest. Nothing for it, we had to press on and we made good speed returning to Terrey Hills.

It was then down the nice smooth McCarrs Creek Road, giving our legs a bit of a rest before we turned left into West Head Road and the big climb up towards West Head. This is a bit of a cycling challenge, as no sooner do you get going, you have to climb the next hill. We passed David Giltrap and Fergus Dixon already heading back in the opposite direction with their heads down and clearly pushing hard. Nick pulled ahead as we neared West Head look out and I for one made a pig's breakfast by not selecting the correct gear to round the steep U turn at the end and struggled to get back up the hill to the next drinks stop. Never was a Powerade more appreciated.

As we drank and fueled up, I couldn't help but think about the awful Akuna Bay to Terrey Hills climb. Nothing for it but an energy bar to get me up the hill. Soon we were off, whizzing down the hill from West Head on the lovely smooth road surface. Nick and I made good use of taking it in turns to lead. As we turned right onto General San Martin Drive, I could not help but notice the temperature was rising, not a good thing with such a big climb ahead. The road surface was rough and uneven which made things a little uncomfortable. The ride down to Akuna Bay passes through nice bush with views of Coal and Candle Creek before we started the grind up the hill to Terrey Hills.

There is not much to say about this climb but just to endure it. My lowest gear was too high which made it more of a struggle. Nick sensibly had lower gears available to him so didn't make such heavy weather of the climb. Memo to self – get new gears!! I felt the climb would never finish, but I wasn't the only one to complain so I was in good company.

Our final drinks stop was at Terrey Hills and with the temperature now well into the high 20s, we drank up big time before we were off past the German School once again to Belrose and then down Mona Vale Road to St Ives. This was a fast ride as it was mostly slightly downhill with the warm wind behind us. Of course, we still had "Nasty Little Hill" to climb as you come into St Ives. That hurts at the best of times. After 100km already in the saddle, it was even worse.

The ride through St Ives and Turramurra was uneventful and made all the more pleasant by the excellent directions and encouragement provided by the course marshals and the Police.

Nick and I finished in 4 hours 19 minutes moving time to be greeted by Margaret. We were knackered and keen to grab a cold beer. We'd signed up for the "hospitality package" so had access to refreshments, beer and pies, which was just what we needed.

Other Treadlers who finished were, Andrew Vitalis, Jenny Giltrap, David Giltrap, Dave Owen, Chris Ball, Fergus Dixon and Simon Marks. Some enjoyed the ride, taking selfies at the beauty spots like West Head, while others pressed on. Fergus and David Giltrap finished in just over 4 hours. Chris Bell, a new Treadler, finished in just under 3 hours coming in 7<sup>th</sup> overall. Well done Chris, there's nothing like youth!

This was a great event made all the more enjoyable by Nick's encouragement and cheerfulness. Great challenge! Will I do it again next year? Probably I will as I don't know any better!!!