

June PERFECT Ride Report

Waterloo – 9 Gaps Ride.

Unfortunately Dave (along with Kevin and Bruno) was an apology for this ride.

Although I am unable to emulate Dave's excellent style I have put together a report with photos taken by the other members of the group.

5 riders – Chris, Andrew, Steve, Kevin and myself set off at about 9:20 AM to ride 67 km through 9 Gaps crisscrossing the Tothill Range. It was apparent the vast transformation to the last ride in this area – previously dry and yellow now green and lush after recent rains.

First stop was at the top of Quinn Gap – most of us walked the last bit to the top. The wind farm at the top has caused some ongoing controversy due to noise. This was one of the earlier wind farms – noisier than newer generations and one of the closest farms to a town.



The swoop down the other side was exhilarating with speeds up to 50 kph.

The second climb was Web Gap, again most of us walked the last bit. Kevin explained that the whole section of this part of the Tothill Range had been set aside by the local landowners as a conservation area. The road surface on the way down had a few turns and loose gravel so speeds were down a bit at 40 kph.

The last climb of the day was the famed/feared Niblet Gap, this is a rarely used 4wd track only on bare rock in many places. I had set myself the challenge to ride up and down without stopping. As I neared the top I hit a steep bare rock section and didn't have the strength to maintain forward momentum, abruptly turned ninety degrees and came to a sudden stop. Unfortunately for Steve, he had decided (correctly!) that I was taking the wrong line and had to stop suddenly as I swung abruptly in front of him.



We regrouped at the top and surveyed the bare rock descent. Chris went first, but had to walk the first difficult section (an excellent job considering he had no suspension). The rest went next with varying amounts of walking. I went last and with my heart in my mouth managed to ride the full distance.

We then rode past Apoinga Lagoon, this was the site for a smelter intended for the Burra Copper mines as well as the more northern mines (I assume Blinman and Nuccaleena). Never been able to find the site – the remains have been long since removed.

Stopped for lunch at Tothill Gap. By this time it was 12:30 PM, no break and only covered 21 km with 45 km to go. Decided to change the route with a short loop to the east then crossed to Emuville. This is a locality about 1.5 km east of Black Springs on the flanks of a Gap through the range. There is absolutely nothing there, but examining Google Earth at high magnification, the cadastral boundaries show a group of small blocks either side of Black Springs Road (at the intersection of Koonoona Road. Research after the ride shows that the 80 acre block was purchased by Edmund Barton (later Sir Edmund Barton) when first released and subdivided into 38 town blocks. He was unable to sell a single block and the project never went ahead.

We went left down a dirt track (the northern end of Emuville Road) and found the extensive ruins of an old farm/station complex. Homestead, several barns and other stone buildings with a huge hitching rail out the front. Obviously an important property in the early days.



Arrived back at Waterloo at about 3 PM, about 15 km short of our original target and bypassing Moller Gap. We headed off to the Marrabel Hotel but found that it has now closed and is now a private residence. As far as I am aware there is now only one business open in the town – a (new) light engineering

workshop. This is a far cry from the state of the town when I lived there as a small boy in the 1950s – from the North end of town – Blacksmith shop, Hotel, bank, general store, post office, general store, Flour mill (ruin in 1956), Methodist Church, Primary School and garage (now the light engineering workshop after being closed for over 50 years).

We took Kevin's suggestion and went on to the Allendale North Hotel (just outside Kapunda). A delightful small country town hotel with plenty of character built in 1853 just a few years after the discovery of copper at Kapunda.

Next month's ride will be from the Red Grape Bakery at Sevenhill starting at 8:30 AM on Sunday 21st July. I will double check before the ride, but the Bakery opens at 7 AM for an early morning coffee!! Right next to the Sevenhill pub as well!!!! Setting out along Possingham Pit Road, down Spring Gully, north to Armargh and white hut, crossing Camel Hump Range on the Old Burra Road, swinging back towards Farrel Flat and back to Sevenhill. The theme of the ride will be to explore why the Burra Road was first on this route and then abandoned in favour of the current road through Farrell Flat

Peter