

## PERFECT ride from Kulpara to Lochiel, Sunday September 18<sup>th</sup> 2022

The ride from Kulpara was a replacement for a previous ride where we took on the prickly field and lost. Kevin demonstrated his ability as a PERFECT Ride leader by duplicating the conditions of the previous ride – a howling westerly gale. Kevin and I were the only riders to tackle the conditions. We started off North along the main road with a strong cross wind before turning right for a tail wind around the Hummocks Range. We got to the track with the prickles from last time. I suggested that we should be OK to go through as we both had good puncture resistant tire systems but Kevin said no (no sense of adventure!!!). There was a persistent drizzle that started to work up to being a rain shower. I had to step in and stop the rain. (used the method of stopping, removing the back pack – getting out the raincoat putting it on, then the backpack back on and riding off.) The rain immediately stopped and only a few light drizzles for the rest of the day. This method of stopping the rain works every time !!!!!

We rode on through various wheat paddocks – to our city eyes the crops looked very healthy – dark green and thick. Should be a good harvest this year. Kevin's route took us along Crusher Road with a detour about 1 km from the main road. Garmin maps showed this as an interesting track through to the main road. Kevin had studied google maps and street view and there was a gate and the track looked fairly overgrown. We soon found that there was indeed a gate but with fences down both sides it was probably a public access track. We decided to take the detour rather than risk a potential confrontation about whether we should be there or not. When we rode back up the main road past the other end we found there was a road sign pointing down the track that had been painted over to hide the road name. Probably a ploy by the land owner to dissuade people from using what is public access over what they use as their own private land.

We climbed up the hills again then turned right and rode into Lochiel via the "back entrance". Lochiel is a country town that has seen better days – The original store has long since been converted into a "gallery", not sure what it sells or if it is ever open, the coffee shop that replaced it has been converted to a residence.



*Grainy, out of focus long shot of genuine Lochiel monster.*



*Interesting art work in the "back entrance" to Lochiel.*

The only business in the town is a large mechanical workshop that doesn't sell petrol. There some well maintained shelters and walks around the Lake Bumbunga showing remnants of the salt works

“Loch-eel Monster” in the lake. This started life as a row 4 or 5 upturned tires installed by some of the “local lads” but nowadays is a more sophisticated sculpture.

After the break we rode out onto the plains and soon came to a road closed detour sign. We decided to keep going and soon came across the reason for the sign – a large mud pool taking up the full road.



*Mudlarks!*

This was the first of many, some could be negotiated by riding around others we had to walk around – all caused a major build up of mud on the bikes. We stopped for lunch down a side road off the main highway. A passing car stopped and asked if we were OK, we assured him we were & he did a UTurn and drove back to the main road. I suppose we did look a bit suss with our bikes and us lying on the ground but we appreciated the thought of the driver making a detour to make sure we were OK. We then rode back to Kulpara into the gale. Kevin made the comment that the wind is not as strong as last time as the wind wasn't picking up dirt this time. I agreed, but on reflection I am not sure if this was correct. Last time the roads were dry and dust and dirt were being picked up – this time the roads were wet, would have to be some gale to pick up mud !!!!

We arrived safely back in Kulpara a bit later than normal and with the longer drive back decided to forgo the normal debrief session.



*Looking with dread towards the final steep climb of the day.*