

## McOppies 2018 Petite Oppy – John McMullan

Not to belittle the great effort the full Oppy riders do (I remember the drawn faces of some at the breakfast) but it is extremely difficult to get a Petite Oppy team together.

When Mark announced that it was time to start getting teams together I put the word out to all the potential riders out of the regular Audax crew to find that half the potentials were off doing a completely different ride.

I soon discovered that Ruth was up for the petite challenge and with no other takers I contacted three non-Audax cyclists that I work (or worked) with who put their hands up to be a part of the team.

I met Ruth at January's Every Which Way – I rode the 200, Ruth the 100 and once the team was put together I raised the training question – who wants to do some training rides. Unfortunately Audax dates and training availability made it difficult for one of the team and by the time we rode the Berry Good 200 he had withdrawn due to other commitments but thankfully David Booth stepped up to the pedal-plate and joined the team.

Training rides were few and far between as my remaining two non-Audax riders were not willing to commit to a ride twice as far as they had ridden before (the B2GC) without training so we alternated weekends. David elected to refrain from our training rides as he was quite capable anyway.

Les, Darren and I could ride Sundays, Ruth and I could ride Saturdays (Audax and training rides) so we set up a few simple rides to get the ball rolling.

The Petite Oppy route I had planned was in two bits – Day 1 was from St Lucia to Nundah then following basically a modified Horizontal Hundred route and back to St Lucia over several more bridges. Day 2 was a lazy half river loop.

Les, Darren and I met at St Lucia to have a training ride that took in most of the southern end of the Petite Oppy route I had planned – out to Nudah Crit track then to Sandgate via the planned route. We stopped at the coffee shop beside Hoffy cycles for a cuppa and bite to eat before heading back. At the Crit track I indicated we would do a lap as Les and Darren had not been on the track before so once on the track I bolted with Les hanging onto my wheel so he didn't drop off. Darren was caught unprepared and made a slower lap but we stopped for a short break before heading back to St Lucia with Les heading home a bit before the end.

The second training run was to be the top half of the course so sneakily Ruth and I signed up for the Horizontal Hundred permanent – Ruth Saturday, me both days.

On Saturday, Ruth rode to the crit track and we kicked off together and took a slightly quicker pace than I would normally have for a training ride. The route was pretty quick northwards and when stopping for a bite to eat we hit the BP – Ruth for Chocolate Milk, me for Banana cake and a coke.

We headed back into a southerly wind and took a little longer to get back but still with plenty of time remaining. The pace was quicker than I wanted for the Petite Oppy and Ruth and I discussed that and riding strategy whilst having a rest at the end of the ride.

On Sunday Les rode to the Crit track and Darren living 40km away drove up to meet us. We had a wet day for the ride but took our time, stopping for me to take my customary photo of the same view that I send my wife so she gets to see some of the route (bit boring being the same place every time tho on the HH) and then to Maccas to the control and a bite to eat. We stayed and chatted for a while to recover then made our slow start up the hill towards Redcliffe. The wind direction was more southerly so I took the lead and let Darren and Les draft to save energy. The trip southwards was very wet, very windy but incident free. We stopped for a short break at Sandgate before resuming southwards once again. It was an incident free return but still wet and windy. At the Crit track we parted company after I gave Les a couple of my favourite chocolate coated Museli bars to sustain him on the way back.

The following weekend Ruth and Darren were not available but Les did want to have another training ride. This was another opportunity to sneak in another Audax as well (there is a pattern here called a 5000km award). Les met me at the Crit track (whilst I was half way through the Mangroves to Mountains 50km). The day started frustratingly for me with a flat rear with the bike still on the paddock stand. A 15 minute tube change and off out the door to ride to Pete's for the start making it just as the rider briefing started.

It must have been the day for punctures because part way down Nudgee Rd Pete stopped with a flat and we bid him farewell as we rode on (with Lindsay taking the lead). I collected Les at the Crit track and soon after we found Leah with a flat as well. With Leah being looked after by Mark we continued on along the bike track north wards to Nudgee and a nice cuppa at Pams. Once the coffee and nibbles were consumed Pete shows up holding two tubes – explaining why he took his time.

We were soon on our way to Pete's to the finish to find banana cake and other goodies Anne had cooked up in preparation. An excellent finish to an awesome short ride.

Les and I headed off to get him back to a familiar route (I got us lost on the way there somewhat) but got Les back to the Boondall Wetlands bikeway and I headed home myself – both of us completing a satisfying short 80km ride.

The first time the team would all be together would be for the start of the Oppy. We agreed to meet near the ferry terminal but due to some other sporting event being on at St Lucia I ended up parking opposite the bike exit to the Green Bridge. This made it difficult for Ruth to find us but really easy for David who exited the bridge just before starting time.

The weather was kind for the day. Lighting check completed, we had just kicked off and encountered The Alternative heading in the opposite direction on Sir William Macgregor Drive. We made our way via the bicentennial bikeway, over the Go Between and Kurilpa bridges then northwards via bikeways to Shaw road where the traffic controllers once again had put roadsigns in the bike lane without any advance warning further up the road. Disgruntled we headed onto the bikepath, crossed Shaw road and continued through the bikeways to our first break – the coffee shop beside Hoffys.

Re-caffinated, nibbles eaten we made a quick pitstop at Flinders Parade then onwards again – over the bridge, up Elizabeth Ave and along the Horizontal Hundred route to our one control at Maccas.

The lunch break was full of various discussions but was soon over after an adequate rest.

The return trip was a little erratic (thanks to RWGPS setting a course that I didn't fully appreciate and me missing a turn – well we went further – twice). Going along the Margate foreshore we soon encountered that little pinch – us lads amazed Ruth as we all got on the pedals and hit the hill like a well oiled and disciplined machine – a fluke really but still impressed Ruth.

The trip back to Sandgate was uneventful from there making another quick pitstop at the end of Flinders parade. We then quickly went to our next stop at Hoffs only to find ourselves in a social crisis – one coffee shop had closed and the other was closing! We were indecisive – should we go across the roundabout to the coffee club or continue riding? Ruth found this hilarious – seeing the distraught look on our faces.

Just as we decided to continue on by crossing the road just above the roundabout on Seymore St I noticed that Dominoes had *Hand Crafted* Espresso thickshakes *and* they were open. Decision made, David and I had an espresso, others choosing other drinks so we rested up again for a little while.

Rejuvenated and in good spirits we journeyed onwards along the route back to Roma St and down across the Kurilpa Bridge. This is where I discovered my worst planning nightmare – we were to ride the boardwalk the length of Southbank to go over the Good Will bridge but the place was littered with pedestrians walking haphazardly all over the segregated and shared pathways – it seemed like forever to ride the boardwalk but in reality took ten minutes to do so. Once over the Good Will, Victoria and Go Between bridges then along the Bicentennial Bikeway and St Lucia. We stopped outside St Lucy's, noted our times and Kms then departed home for the night. End of day for us was 5:28pm – a far cry from the full Oppy riders.

Day 2 had us arrive at St Lucy's for a 6am start. I scored the closest parking spot and we kicked off for a lazy river loop. Over the undulations, down long pocket and (due to another planning error) all the way out in the middle of the park to the end of the path. Turning around was somewhat funny and anyone looking would have wondered what this crazy bunch was up to.

We soon found ourselves at the Indooroopilly Bridge and I had taken the lead to keep the group together where we encountered team SOFT looking like a well oiled machine half way across the bridge.

Onwards around the river loop and I needed to chase two of the team down as they kept the pace up near Ant's place. Regrouped we almost finished the ride without incident when we had a tricky mechanical at the exit of the Green bridge. David's chain had come off and got jammed between the crank arm and the large chain ring. It took a while to get it un-jammed and with greasy hands we finished the distance to find bikes everywhere at St Lucy's and Leah awaiting our Brevets.

With the ride completed we picked a table, ordered breakfast and drinks then watched as other riders arrived. I must say that many of the full Oppy teams looked worn out which makes their achievements even greater after the challenge. Well done to all the riders!

Compared to many of the other teams we had a relatively easy time of it but I would like to mention that both Darren and Les completed their longest ride for the Petite Oppy so well done to them!

During breakfast I caught up with Mark Riley who commented on how coherent the McOppies looked when we passed on the Indooroopilly Bridge. Good timing on our part!

The McOppies:



L-R David Booth, John McMullan, Ruth Brown, Darren Milczewski, Les O'Shea.

Thanks to Vaughan for being our photographer and Ruth for her input into this ride report.