

# Ride Report for the *Almost* Downs and Back

By John McMullan

The Inaugural Almost Downs and Back resulted by the RO splitting the Downs and Back ride options into four separate calendar rides. This helped the calendar fill a little better but had a down side that some weekends had longer rides which may not have suited all riders. Not to worry as there are permanents for the less hardy of us for those weekends.

The 200km ride is a relatively flat course, although you ride over the Grandchester range twice, and climb the same height to Ma Ma creek (over a 30km distance) it is typically a pleasant ride.

Peter Lovell and I decided to ride together as we have almost the same ride speed with Peter being a mountain goat climbing hills quickly, and I descend them speedily to make up the time.

We started out at a nice pace, climbing the first couple of lumps at River Hills and once we reached the rail way line noticed that there was a little bit of a head breeze as we headed past the Gales golf course. Traffic was light, weather overcast and a nice 26 degrees for riding comfort.

We got as far as Redbank before the first puncture arrived. As with all punctures, the tire requires close inspection to ensure that whatever punctured the tire is removed before proceeding. As this photo shows, I think I know how it happened.



A quick insertion of some spare pieces of tube under the cut and a new tube soon saw us back on the road but not before Duncan and Paul had passed us.

By the time we climbed Chermside Rd at Ipswich and crossed Brisbane Rd we had caught up to Duncan where we had a quick chat on the way up the hill. Peter and Duncan got caught out slightly with the right turn into Thorn St and we soon appreciated the smoothness of the country roads because Thorn and Moffat Sts certainly weren't.

The ride to Rosewood (with the almost obligatory pit stop) then the climb over Grandchester seemed pretty event free except that Peter waited at a different part of the top of the range.

Laidley greeted us with the Rural Fire Brigade roadside giving us a wave as we passed. We stopped at the bakery for a quick bite to eat and just before we headed off Paul and Duncan arrived.

It was still overcast as we made our way through Gatton where the quicker riders passed us on their return leg. Just after turning onto Wells Rd our second puncture for the day –this time Peter was the unfortunate recipient. The roadside was a bit muddy and Peter made a speedy repair but neither of us escaped the muddy mess. As we made our way along the remainder of Wells Rd, Mother Nature started her washing machine and the rain came down – torrential rain that is – at least tus and the bikes were cleaner. We made pretty quick work getting soaked on our way to Ma Ma Creek where it was still bucketing down. Whilst having our next break, the rain started to ease:



The gutter at the peak was overflowing at the peak of the rainfall. In typical Queensland fashion, the rain stopped just as we went to leave. In typical glass half full optimism, I informed Peter that the next 30km was downhill (at 0.1% slope) but we made very good time through Gatton and back to Laidley. At one point we had a bit of tail wind so I took full advantage and we were averaging well over 30kmh before Forest Hill.

On the way through, we took advantage of the refurbished facilities at Laidley (just before the turn onto Rosewood Laidley Rd) finding a drink fountain in the park there as well.

The climb over Grandchester on the return was as underwhelming as the outward leg (both directions seem to get easier each time) and we soon passed through Rosewood. Ipswich was a good run with us discussing a quick stop at the top of Chermside Rd for a quick bite before the descent but in the end decided to stop at Uncle Bills for a drink even though the control is listed as the Puma Servo about 12km later. After a quick rest we made quick time to the Puma where we noted the time and signed each other's Brevet before the 'sprint' to Vaughans. The hardest climb left was the turn to Sumners Road before we rode the undulations to the finish. The last few k's along Horizon drive seem to take forever even though we finished in good time.

So, the *Almost* Downs and back lived up to it's name – almost to the Downs, almost puncture free, almost no sunshine, almost no rain, almost no mud, almost no headwind. All in all, a good day out.