

Well how did the ride go? It was probably the easiest 400 of all time. We spent about one to two hours at each of the six controls. Rode at speeds approaching 40 km/h with little effort, in the end we had to slow down deliberately. We had a strong tailwind all day followed by a cool still night. The roads are in almost perfect condition, especially the last 100 km of hot mix from Ayr to Townsville. If we had been chasing the record, this would have been the time to do it. Maybe sometime in the future things will be as perfect again but I doubt it.



*Inaugural TrOppy participants:
Peter McCallum, David Adams, Phil Burnham, Peter Robertson, Jenny Townley, and Troy Forbes*

Four Decades

Anne Latimer

The challenge for 'Four Decades' was to become the first all-female team in Queensland to complete the Fleche Opperman All Day Trial.

The team

Anne Latimer: (48 yrs) our captain, who kept us on track and made us think about the planning for our ride with many breakfast meetings.

Deb Aitcheson: (49 yrs), our organisational expert, who made sure our food was correct and compartmentalised.

Holli Linklater: (39 yrs), our non-navigator, who provided us with many delightful, light hearted moments.

Lynne James: (63 yrs), our mother figure, who made sure we got going on Sunday morning.

The bikes

Our road bikes, three Pinarellos and a Merida, were outstanding on the journey. Despite weeks of practising how to take off the rear wheel and change out a flat, our bikes could not have performed better on the day. We were well stocked with repair equipment, tubes, gas canisters—even a spare tyre, sacrificing our water carrying ability in case something went wrong. As luck would have it, our equipment went unused, despite some moments of dread riding through smashed glass and rough road surfaces.

The preparation

We began training at the beginning of February, with about six weeks to go.

Our road preparation was hampered by very wet weather, but we were able to do at least two long rides as well as adding a couple of extra river loops to our usual weekend rides. All of our training was done together and we were fortunate to have access to indoor CompuTraining at MB Cycles in Milton. We also trained three times at altitude at the Brisbane Altitude Centre.

With no break in the rain, we embarked on a six-hour CompuTrainer session together. Not much fun for the derriere, and certainly not as exciting as being out on the road. The pain and suffering was tempered to some degree by a gourmet picnic provided by Deb. The food, wrapped and packed in individually named picnic bags, was to be a trial run for the main event.

We had unwavering support from Marcel Bengston from MB Cycles, who spread the word about our goals and gave us confidence that we could do the ride. Marcel supplied us with a support vehicle which our support team used to cart supplies to our checkpoints. The van also carried our bikes and our tired bodies home from Ipswich after the Oppy was all over.

Boulderstone supplied our high visibility jackets, bags for our gear and caps. We may have set another 'first'

when the man sized high viz vests went into the seamstress for alterations!

The ride

Our course commenced at MB Cycles at Milton and run through the northern suburbs and, then through Scarborough, Redcliffe, Sandgate, across the Gateway Bridge through the bayside suburbs back through the city to the overnight stop at Holli's place. The next leg started with a river loop (well known to Brisbane cyclists), through the bikeways to Springfield and then to the finish at Brothers in Ipswich.

At 8 am on 16 March 2013 we were physically and mentally ready. We started the ride wearing our pink kits so that motorists could identify us as women. This was a good decision as we were treated with courtesy and respect.

We completed the first leg of our journey at a good pace, through heavy traffic out to Chermside and then onto the Samsonvale loop. Our arrival at the Narangba checkpoint was spot on time. Our support vehicle was manned by a roster of six wonderful men, all of whom welcomed us with encouragement and support. It was comforting to see them waiting for us at each of our check points.

The second leg, from Narangba to Sandgate was testing in the heat of



Leaving Springfield

the day. The temperature in Brisbane on 16 March climbed to 32 degrees. Our fitness and the bond we had established enabled us to continue cycling through any low points of the day, which included the heat and concern for the wellbeing of one another. We were all determined to achieve our goal; nobody said they did not want to continue and there was no disharmony amongst the team. We worked together and remained in good spirits, despite the tough conditions.

The sunset stop at Wynnum was a relief. Lots of stories to tell from our long day on the road, a welcome change of kit and a great support crew

Mission accomplished



to spur us on before we embarked on our night ride.

The polite and courteous traffic that we had experienced throughout the day, had changed drastically by Saturday night when we were consistently threatened by drivers who seemed to enjoy driving close to us, or accelerating as they came alongside us.

We rode slower than we anticipated in the dark, which put us about two and a half hours behind schedule at the end of our first leg. With the knowledge we would also be slower in the early morning, we had to adjust our timings which meant next-to-no sleep before we had to hit the road again. We were

able to have a hot shower and team dinner at Holli's place and then with less than an hour's sleep, we were back at it. All of us have moments of the ride that we can't quite remember. Sleep deprivation will do that to you!

We arrived at our final checkpoint at 5.15 am and we were able to rest until 6 am. All four of us rested our heads on the concrete footpath, not a comfortable choice, but a welcome relief from the saddle. We had diligently planned our course and had driven 330-odd kilometres of the 365 km course. The only part we had not seen was the home stretch to Brothers. As it turns out the final 34 km was the most hilly of our entire ride (how did we do this to ourselves?)

Our arrival at the finish at 7.28 am was a joyous occasion. Lynne had mustered up a wonderful squad of cycling mates to give us a cheer at the finish line. There were tears and hugs and laughter—and then the overwhelming need for sleep!

Three of us had decided during the previous 24 hours that we would not ride another Oppy, and weeks later that had not changed. But check in with us again next year—you never know!

We have all taken some time to recover from our great adventure, but will definitely be stronger (both physically and mentally) for having completed the ride. We have gained respect, support and friendship that has come with being part of a team that needed each other to survive the Oppy.

Finally we need to acknowledge and thank the people who without their support this successful journey would have been made much more difficult: Marcel Bengston, Michael Deed, Sandy Vigar, Peter Deed, Geoff Harris, Peter James, Col Latimer, Geoff Cree and Phil Wildey.