

“The support vehicle challenge”

Dino Morgante

A cool brisk morning greeted 25 riders at Walton Bridge Park at The Gap for the 18th running of The Wonders of Glorious Mee. There were a number of faces I had not seen for a while, so it was good to see them return, and for some having come back from injury and illnesses. Also for more than half of the riders this was their first attempt at TWoGM. I was also ably supported by Anne, Vaughan and Jessica. And, if the wind at the registration point was anything to go by, the riders were in for an interesting morning. With the paperwork complete and a riders briefing under the helmet, it was time to pedal on.

The riders headed off at 7 am with a slight headwind to deal with. The first 34 km leg from The Gap to Mt Glorious is a tough test with a fair proportion of the day's climbing dealt with on Mt Nebo and Mt Glorious. Although the ride brief made careful notice of numerous potholes, Rodney unfortunately struck one which caused a puncture—but there would be something more sinister afoot! Once arriving at the first control at Mt Glorious, all riders tucked-in to a variety of breads, snack and drinks, and a most welcomed rest point for all. As riders came and went, the gap was at one hour between the first and last departures from Mt Glorious and I feared we were in for a challenging day to keep up with the lead riders. Yes, the thrill of the chase.

With most riders headed off for the 50 km to the next control at Somerset, it was going to be test of speed and skill to negotiate the perilous downhill sections of Mt Glorious to the bottom of the range and stretching the legs out on the long and winding roads beyond—by the way, and I am referring to the support crew here, not the riders—amazing what one can do in a two tonne Kluger on all-terrain tyres. The challenge to catch the lead riders was on, and I knew it would be close. Having counted 22 riders before Somerset village was in sight, I realised we had been done-in. We caught up with the gents at the shelter sheds to find out that for the last few kilometres into town they were ably assisted by strong tailwind, achieving speeds up to 60 km/h. We never had a chance. Even better for them was the unusual lack of bother from our favourite feathered pest, the magpie. However, with only 30 km to next control at Kilcoy, a quick stop and food check was in order before leaving

Vaughan and Anne to face the throng of following riders.

Myself and Jessica then whisked off into the distance to again play “chasics” with the lead boys. Having given the boys a half hour jump it still took us some time to catch the lead riders, and at only 10 km out from the control. As we got to Yowie Park, lady luck was shining on us, with a spare parking spot and a seated shelter area almost waiting for us—this is a rarity on a Saturday due to the local markets. After a quick chat with the elderly gent, explaining my needs for the shelter area, he kindly offered to move his stuff around his tent. As we brought the gear in I continued my chat with old mate, and he asked what sort of bikers were coming through. Bikers?! When I explained they were cyclists on push bikes riding 200 km he thought we were all resoundingly mad—funny that, most “normal” people tend to think that of us. Anyway, shortly after setting up the first of the riders came rolling in just before noon, and the food was soon disappearing off the table faster than their riding. As riders came and went from the Kilcoy control, I realised the spread of riders meant that I didn't have too many riders to feed at one time, which was handy in a way. My daughter Jessica was also brushing up on some keen skills in the serving department.

After seeing off the last riders from Somerset, Vaughan and Anne passed through Kilcoy to pick up further food stocks before heading off to the next control atop Mt Mee. I let them know the lead guys had left about an hour earlier so it was best they got a wriggle on. As more riders came into Kilcoy, concerns were also raised about the behaviour of some motorists and motorcyclists shouting abuse and riding too close—bike pumps come to mind, hmm. The last of the riders

departed Kilcoy just after 2 pm. Jess and I then started the clean-up and pack-up. Just as the last of the gear was being loaded, TRAGEDY STRUCK! I had a blow-out—in my shoe that is. My sole had almost parted ways with the boot. Damn it, more money.

Anyway, goofy walking aside, we were into the car and took the quicker route along the D'Aguilar Hwy. En route to Mt Mee we passed riders on the three kilometre climb as well as the lumps and bumps to the control point at the Mt Mee State School. When we arrived Anne told us the front bunch had left shortly after 2 pm. With only 40-something kilometres to the final control at Samford, we unloaded some more food and left Vaughan and Anne to comfort the bedraggled riders in the cooling afternoon breeze. A quick foot race back to the car with Jess saw my footwear deteriorate even further, now sounding more like a clown's flipper foot, as I had to shorten my stride for fear of tearing it from the bottom of my shoe. In we got, and short of breaking some legal land-speed records we arrived in Samford just before 4 pm, but missing four bodies to pass on the road. We found the gents chilling out at the local Buzz Cafe sipping on a variety of beverages. They had made short work of the last leg getting to Samford around 3.30 pm—well done chaps!

Over the next few hours the tired bodies of riders arrived at John Scott Park, with some collapsing on the grass for a well earned rest. A number of riders, still with enough energy, then travelled the last 12 km back to the start at the Gap—more hills to climb. The last of the riders came in just after 7 pm with lights ablaze to the raucous cheer of the chosen few and congratulations all round. After a short rest, we loaded the bikes and tired bodies of the last

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three riders onto the cars and headed for the start point at the Gap. Earlier, you may remember Rodney had a puncture in the section to Mt Glorious. Well, while taking his bike from the rack I happened to hold it by the forks and realised he had done more than pop a tyre—the steerer stem was floating around in the head tube. Lucky guy.

All riders enjoyed the scenic tour and were very appreciative of the support during and after the ride. I'm sure more than just a few riders will take a few memories and a little bit more experience away from this ride. Well done to all, and especially my support crew on the day, Vaughan, Anne, and Jessica (helping her dad out for the first time).