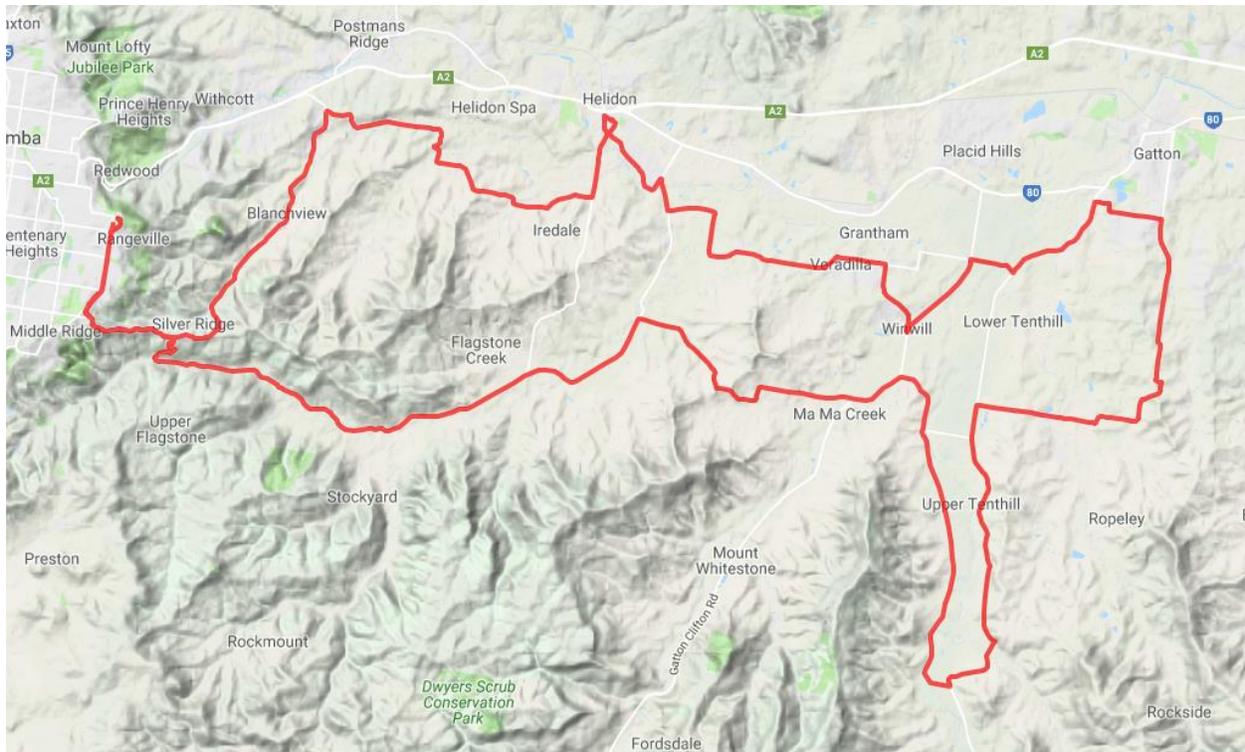


## Ride Report – Ride the Range 2018



This is a ride of 112km on roads familiar to many. It's not an Audax event, and so you might wonder why it's here. It was one of those "things I had to do" and it represents a transition from a situation beyond my control that might have robbed me of the enjoyment of cycling. It's about understanding the Audax mindset, the beginning of taking on more challenging and adventurous riding.

Here's what happened and why.

In November 2016 I completed a 200km Peachey Mee with Brian. At that time I was plenty fit, but really lacked an understanding or appreciation of long distance riding. It was just about getting to the end as quickly as possible rather than fully enjoying the experience of being out on the course.

A few weeks later I found myself in hospital dealing with a life threatening medical situation. A massive clot had destroyed my left leg and I had clots in the lungs as well. Thanks to the skill of the medical team and much better than average cardiac health I survived but all the doctors at that time said that riding in future was completely out of the question. Except one. She said why not, so I clung to that thought and the work began.

I have a kickr, acquired following my crash in March 2016 when a random bunch that had formed around me stopped suddenly without warning at 40km/h. I broke my hand and couldn't operate the brake. Riding on the road was out so what else could I do? I got hooked on Zwift, joined a club and started racing online. I also use [VeloReality](#) which syncs video the trainer. Alpe d'Huez is one of the rides I have. It took about two months to get all the way to the top but eventually I did and it became my local climb. I learned a lot about climbing; managing my effort, heart rate, pacing, good technique.

At that time of peak kickr use I crushed the local hills and still have a top 10 time on the hill at Yugar and a few others round the place as well. Of course I had two fully functioning legs then - those were the days.

And so imagine only being able to operate the trainer for maybe 5 minutes at a time, very slowly and incredibly painfully. I built up from there and got back on the road. My local bike club welcomed me back and I sat at the back of the pack for very short distances. There was no power in the left leg at all, any time the elevation went slightly up I fell right off the back. This is about when I met Laura and she has been supporting the rehab ever since, and you may have seen the two of us cruising the occasional 100km event.

Moving forward now to the end of last year and the distance has been pushed out to 100km with a few lumps. We did take on the Rollercoaster, but this proved arduous with the level of fitness at that time. And so obviously, we hatched a plan to take on the Ride the Range event. More correctly, I convinced Laura this was a brilliant idea. On my part this was unfinished business owing to the crash mentioned earlier. For both of us this was a stretch target, achievable, but requiring some solid preparation. Riding down the range is no challenge but riding back up, well, it was something we would need to work on.

Thus began the ~~secret training~~ preparation.

I went with kickr+sufferfest plus kilometres on local hills. [Sufferfest](#) is a structured training methodology involving a proprietary take on stressing physiology, linked to video. While doing the standard sorts of exercises on the trainer with the load aligned to ftp, you find yourself immersed in videos of racing events. It is intense to the point of almost throwing up at times, and perversely, it seems I enjoy that sort of thing a lot. The Sufferfest approach is holistic, includes yoga and mental preparation and for me was a much better idea than just smashing it out on the trainer.

Working with the trainer provides good feedback for those so inclined. Unlike working on the road, it removes environmental variables, it is repeatable, you can deeply focus on technique or other training aspects without having to deal with traffic or other road conditions. There are stats you can microanalyse to your hearts content as well. The engineer's brain approves of this approach.

The road component included all the local lumps, Bunya Roads, Mt Glorious, Winn Road, Mt Mee, the hill on Hipothites Road, Goat Track, you name it. Been up and down them all – but not after having done 100km first, a flaw in the preparation. I am very susceptible to heat, a thing I inherited with the injury. When it gets hot the leg swells up and the power goes away. Hold that thought.

Finally, Laura and I both did a number of 100km+ rides including the Mangroves to Mountains + extra the week prior to the RTR. We were about as ready as we could be.



And so we rode the range. A foggy start greeted us as we awaited our departure. We chatted with Liz who was also there but being a very strong rider she departed with the pointy end of the field. I advised that I get much better value from being out on the course all day, a novel concept it seems.

Laura and I let those keen to proceed head off and once the starting area thinned we took to the course. As usual [the descent down the range](#) was enjoyable, the various lumps on the course lumpy and the descents, twists and turns fast and fun. We cruised past the spot where I ended up on the road two years earlier putting that incident to rest. Leisurely gliding through the valleys on this particularly awesome day was especially enjoyable. The photographers eye appreciated the light and forms across the landscape, and I quietly lamented the lack of a suitable camera to record the moment. Turns out photography and cycling are almost mutually exclusive activities.

We comfortably made our way to the bottom of the climb at about the 103km mark and commenced the ascent to the finish. By now it was hot, and the heat had taken its toll on the leg and so I was walking the steeper bits and riding where I could. Laura and I had practiced mounting the bike on a slope and it was one of the things that worked as expected. While some people expressed amazement at this feat, its actually not difficult and as a person with a dodgy leg, something I have become quite good at for obvious reasons.

I stopped to perform a rescue. A rider had cramped on the climb and was unable to get off his bike. He was awkwardly astride his bike at a precarious angle at the side of the road on a particularly steep part of the climb. How long he had been this way I did not ask but he was ever so grateful to be released from his predicament.

Further up the road I paused in the shade and had a discussion with a resident about the level of sanity required to ride up the hill at any time, let alone in the heat of the day. She kindly offered water. I thanked her and declined and so she offered me a beer instead.



Eventually I arrived at Rowbotham Street, where the road up the range meets the edge of Toowoomba. One last effort up the nasty pinch on Rowbotham Street and I was properly on my way to the finish. I had constantly reminded Laura this was the worst hill on the course, short, about 10% and not what you need at that point. It was a lot easier the day before.

As I rolled towards the finish there were cheers and calls of encouragement which was nice. I crossed the line with the immediate thought that I need to eat. A lot. I parked the bike and found that while there were a few riders still on the course, the event was winding down. The food had all been cooked and so I ended up with leftovers comprising the world's best hamburger and a few snags which I immediately dispatched.

Mission accomplished, I hit the road. Reflection on the drive home confirmed the view that the journey is the best bit, the destination just something that brings an end to the experiences on the road. I think I am starting to understand what this Audax thing is all about.