

Bay of Plenty Club Tour

24 riders from the club spent 10 sun filled days cycling from Papamoa Beach to Taupo and back during the second week of November. This is a diary account of the trip by Di Michels

Day 1 Papamoa to Pukehina Beach

This morning we woke to a fantastically clear sunny day and headed out on day one of our tour through the Bay of Plenty. 24 of us (plus Pai on the pannier rack) headed off westward on our 68km ride to Pukehina.

Our plan was to have morning tea at Te Puke but our enthusiastic pedaling had us at the town after just 40 minutes riding. The road there had been completely flat and we had made great progress. The decision was made to carry on to Maketu where we had originally planned to have lunch. We found



a spot in a park at the end of the river mouth that was very pleasant. The wetland area just prior to the outlet of the river was full of maimais and the sand bank was obviously the home for many NZ Dotterels and other shore birds.

After a reasonable stop to sample coffee, cake and muffins we moved on to the next stage that took us up on to the peninsular that over looked our destination. This was tantalizingly close but we headed back west to the main road and crossed over to Paengaroa.

Here we took the Old Coach Road and entered the undulations for the next 15 kms. The road was pleasantly devoid of traffic except for a few locals and took us past the famous kiwifruit orchards. These also provided a lot of shelter from a slight easterly wind. We passed through Pongakawa which seemed to consist of only a school. A very nice one at that! Shortly after Pongakawa we turned back to the east and dropped down to the main road (State Highway 2). Now that we were back in the flatlands we had a headwind to contend with until Pukehina Beach. Not that hard but enough to realize the day had tested our legs a bit.





pretty flat. Our first stop was at Pukehina School where Ron O had been educated several years back. The first sign for the school was a tad disappointing for Ron as it appeared to be a private residence. About another couple of k's further we came across the actual school. Still in use today and very cute. We all assembled by the school bell and with Garth Barfoot's carefully choreographed arrangement, got a nice pic of all the riders and Ron. Apon leaving Garth commented on how Ron had featured on the honours board as the best behaved pupil in 1952..... Yeah right!

We had lunch at Pukehina Beach with the rolling surf pounding the beach during the afternoon. This area seems to be a haven for the dotterels and there are lots of fenced off areas protecting their nesting spots. Pukehina Beach also has a picturesque lagoon that offers nice swimming areas that are protected from the open sea. It is a pleasing thing to see that the dreadful oil slick that covered this beach after the Rena accident has left very little evidence of it's presence, although notices advising against eating shell fish appear occasionally.



Tonight the group will have a barbecue and we will be entertained with Sloop's polystyrene ball game. We were given these cute little balls when we departed Papamoa and each has a letter. We need to find others in the group with the same letters and solve a puzzle? (Not sure what the question is.....)

Day 2 Pukehina Beach to Kawerau

Another splendid day greeted us. White Island was clear to see on the horizon with a large cloud of steam pushing it's way upwards. After the usual breakfast and lunch preparations we were on the way by 8 am. Today would see us get into some more serious hills but the start was

We dropped back down to the coast and followed SH2 through to Matata for morning tea. Carolanne and Jackie, who have been driving the support van for us, choose a nice spot next to the river there and with plenty of shade. After a good break we headed out of town and commenced our climb up Manawahe Rd to the lunch stop at Manawahe. The temperatures were rising about as fast as the terrain and we had several stops along the way. This road is very pretty and almost devoid of traffic. At Manawahe we stopped outside a house with some nice shaded lawn for lunch. After a few more undulations we had a pretty rewarding down hill to Lake Rotoma. The lake was too inviting for Marieke, JB and Sloop and they were in to cool off. Others



dunked their shirts in to the lake as well. We now had the final hill of the day to climb and a truly wicked descent to Kawerau.

We arrived at the Kawerau Thermal Motel at 2.30pm to find the rooms had been sorted and the group split into river walkers and pub crawlers to fill in time until dinner. At 6pm we were presented with ham, spuds and salads cooked by friends of the moteliers. This delicious fare was lapped up by everyone and most went back for 2nds, some were seen 3 times at the buffet table! This was followed by apple shortcake,

cream and ice cream. As I write this the entertainment officer, Sloop, is preparing the showing of *A Good Year* for the group.

The river walkers, led by Garth, went and had a look at the setup for the world rafting championships due to start next weekend. The course for this appears to be right in the middle of town by the canoe slalom course. A few teams were spotted down town but most will probably be arriving this week.

Tomorrow is a longer ride to Murupara which will hopefully be a bit flatter!





Day 3 Kawerau to Murupara

Another early start for the crew and we were away before 8! The weather forecast warned about the possibility of showers in the afternoon so we all carried our rain gear. At the time of departure there wasn't a cloud in the sky. As we left town Garth took us via the river where the preparations are being made for hosting the World Rafting Champs. There was a path right beside the course that would give fantastic views of the action. No one out training at that time of the morning.

We headed north east to Te Teko before turning south. This kept the conical cone of Mt Edgecombe on our right. Although the road was flat there was a small headwind that kept our legs honest. When we reached Te Mahoe we began the ascending that would really test everyone's legs. I queried the fact that the Te Mahoe school was built directly below the Matahina dam? Lake Matahina was a lake I raced on during my rowing career but has not been used since the Edgecombe earthquake struck

as the road into the rowing course was destroyed.

The morning tea stop was at the bottom of the main descent and where the road crossed the river. After many boasts about down hill speed Ron O took the honours – hitting 74km on the way down. We had coffee and tea under a cloudless sky.

We had a flat ride for a while but directly into the wind. It seems that the only time we didn't get affected by the wind was when we going uphill! We had another series of climbs before the lunch stop at Aniwhenua Dam. This was engineered by Kit so he took some of the group





down to look at the power station and the spectacular falls that used to be popular with kayakers. There is a canal leading to the powerhouse as well as the overflow outlet which formed quite a complex. Lunch was under a cloudless sky and thank heavens also under some lovely trees beside the lake. By this time some of the group were feeling the effects of the heat and the hills!

From the lunch stop it was an energy sapping ride into the wind under a cloudless sky! At one point I stopped to refill my water bottles by the van only to have Jackie pass a comment regarding her purchase of an ice cream from the cafe up the road. This comment was

swiftly followed by a shower for her from the water bottle I was holding at the time. It must have been a reflex action to her comment!

Since arriving at the hotel in Murupara some of us have been witness to one of the towns special features.... the locals riding home from work on their horses. It is great to see this happening but like cyclists, they too are pushed out to make room for cars. Many of the riders were ducking and diving under trees as they tried to control some wayward equines.

To night we are having dinner at the local hotel.

Day 4 Murupara to Taupo

Yet another dry day! We headed off in a northwesterly direction which was good from the wind point of view as we had it from the back whilst we climbed up to the plateau. It began with a short couple of k's of moderate climb and then leveled out to become a steady ascent to the top. All this through the majestic pines of the Kaiangaroa Forest, the largest man made plantation in the world. Our morning tea stop was a few kilometers before the Rainbow Mountain on a forest siding. Very nice spot with a mown section and shady trees .

From Rainbow mountain we rode a short section on the main road before



turning off and heading down to Reparoa via Settlers Road. At this point we had done the 180 degree turn into the wind and were testing our legs yet again! The support van was making regular stops by now and keeping a check on the stragglers. Everyone was sorting themselves into small groups to get some sort of protection from the wind. Gradually as we turned west this became a side wind. There was an interesting situation with the dust being blown up from the bare areas of felled forest to the east and the creation of large quantities of dust in the air. At one stage Colin alerted me to close my eyes as a whirlwind of dust passed over our group! Broadlands road is an exposed route and we were all glad to get to the bottom of Mt Tauhara and head down into Taupo.

We are in a backpackers type lodge for two nights and looking forward to a rest day. Some will possibly go for a ride!

Dinner for me tonight has been a smoked trout caught by my son Nigel... yummm!

Day 5 Taupo

This was the rest day although some people seemed keen to continue exercising. Garth took off with a group of enthusiastic walkers to trek from Kinloch back to town. Rather ambitious and rumour has it there was a bit of dissension in the ranks on the way back. I think a taxi was involved in the end!

We had a group dinner at the RSA club which was organised by JB and enjoyed by all. Sloop and Kit ran a hilarious quiz night of cycle questions and identifying old TV music themes.

Day 6 Taupo to Tokoroa

Taupo gave us a chilly send off! Shortly after crossing the Waikato River we climbed up to Poihipi Rd which is notoriously narrow and hilly. We had a short 7km section of this to do before turning off into more quiet back roads. These roads had stunning views of the countryside as we rode through Oruanui and on towards Mokai. They rolled along nicely and eventually we had a fantastic down hill to the Mokauteure Stream. At this point we stopped for morning tea.



We were making really good progress towards Whakamaru, the planned lunch stop, so it was decided that we would have a hill climb and a coasting race. Ron J and JB officiated as each of the group sprinted up the hill and then rolled back





down to the bottom. Apparently there is some sort of committee decision needed to confirm the results but Ron O proved to be the most efficient heavy weight by winning the coasting segment! Rumour has it that he won the uphill as well! We continued to undulate through this scenic part of the country and eventually dropped down to Whakamaru. It was decided to go along to the camping ground for lunch so those who felt inclined could have a swim. When we got there it was a tad windy and chilly for swimming but we had a nice place to eat lunch.

After lunch we had the final 30km section to Tokoroa along SH32. It had a few longer, steeper climbs and these were quite tough with the high temperatures in the afternoon. Most of this was through the Kinleith Forest and with a nice tail wind. Shortly after breaking out of the forested area we were on the outskirts of Tokoroa. This is quite a large town and riding in to find the motel felt like quite a distance.

Tonight we all look forward to a roast meal to fuel us for the next leg to Okaroire.

Day 7 Tokoroa to Okaroire

The skys were a bit overcast this morning as we headed out to our first stop at Jones Landing just south of Arapuni Dam. The terrain was very comfortable rolling countryside with immaculate farms. In the distance was the peaks of Maungatautiri and in the shadows was a peaceful spot



where we had morning tea. The dam at Arapuni is quite dramatic as the wall is very deep and in a narrow section of the Waikato river. At this point I made a small navigation error and took some of the crew up to Horhora Rd, thinking that the access to the swing bridge above the power station was from a side road. Pat had decided to go ahead at this point so JB had quite a chase to real him in and

turn him around.

Back on track we rode over the bridge... well actually most walked over as the bridge is slung very high above the gorge and rather intimidating! The rolling Waikato hills continued as we made our way to Putaruru. We stopped just before the township at a wayside rest stop for lunch. This had a fast moving stream and a waterfall next to it which was quite pleasant.

The day was heating up again as usual and we pretty much split the group up at Tirau as some people wanted to stop for ice creams. The ride to Okaroire was a short undulating one of about 7kms. The accommodation is at the hot springs and



the hotel there has been restored to the period it was originally built in. We had a nice afternoon to recover and have had yet another superb meal presented this evening.

Tomorrow we move on to our final night at Ngongotaha with a big climb over the Mamaku range.

Day 8 Okoroire to Ngongotaha

Today started a little later as we had a breakfast supplied at the hotel. We had a great cooked breakfast – a choice of 6 options and most took the mixed grill. We also seemed to have access to the continental choices so most of us were well filled when we finally got away at

9am. We had a quite quick ride to the bottom of Leslie Rd where we started the climb for the day. It was sealed to about a third of the way over where it changed to gravel.

The morning tea was delivered to the end of the seal for us.

Most of the gravel was quite ridable but occasionally there were spots where it was a little soft and one of these patches on a down hill caught Judy. She spied her landing spot reasonable well but the grass also had a bit of blackberry. Typical Judy though she was back up and on her bike pretty quickly. When I caught up with her she was covered in scratches all over her face and leg. Even after arriving at the accommodation we were still picking the odd prickle out!

The Cecil Rd started at the junction of Galaxy Rd and did not look particularly inviting as the four wheel drive vehicles had been through during some pretty wet times and left large ruts and pools of water. Some in the crew thought I was sending them down the wrong way so they waited for Colin to confirm the direction! At least this section was not more than a few kms. It was a bit sad to see there was a lot of dumped rubbish up at this end of the route and I guess it explains why some of the access to the forests are limited. We had lunch at

Mamaku pretty much at the top of the ranges. From there it was mostly down hill to Lake Rotorua. We came down Oturoa Rd, and immediately we turned on to it JB was gone. He knew the road and was very keen to enjoy what lay ahead. From the bottom of the road it was a short ride to Ngongotaha where most of us stopped for an ice cream – a well deserved reward for an adventurous day. Tonight Steve and Annette's extended family are preparing dinner for us. It is a Lebanese meal which is quite different to the roasts that seem to be the norm for most of the trip.



Day 9 Ngongotaha to Papamoa Beach

The final day of our tour was fine and sunny. We have not had to use our wet weather gear at all over the tour! The road ahead was always going to be tough as we knew there were a couple of gorges to ride through with steep descents and climbs. We had to get over the equivalent of the Kaimais but this road was not quite as busy as some we have been on. We turned off the main road and then ended up on a road that took us up Mt Misery. On the way to this spot we lost Pat as he decided the straight ahead route would be quicker. JB chased him down over five k's or so before he turned him back to where the rest of us were going. By the time these two caught up with the rest of us Judy had decided to pop her gear cable! Arnold and I made a bit of a make shift fix it with a ballpoint pen, some duct tape and zip ties. With this Judy was able to finish the tour without having to get into the van. All the while this was happening Carolanne was dashing back and forth in the van like a

sheep dog rounding everyone up. After Mt Misery we had some really impressive views of the coast and Kaimais before heading down to Welcome Bay. At this point we decided to take a different route through to Papamoa Beach and at some stage Jackie ended up on the side of the road by the causeway and poor Carolanne was now embarking on a mammoth drive back and forth to collect her! It was a little chaotic at this point so we decided to just head to the camping ground where the cars were left and worry about lunch when we got there. The van turned up just before us and we were able to set the lunch up before we all disbanded and headed back to Auckland.

The tour of the Bay of Plenty was a most enjoyable affair with lots of laughter. These tours are always intensive for a few people and it would be fair to say that Annette, Ron J, Lesley, Sloop and Margaret had put in a heap of effort to make it as success. Without them these tours and especially this one would not happen.

