

Cycling for Transport

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This is a new, regular section where we promote bicycles for transport. You can learn more about commuting from other Bike North members. In this first article, Fran Griffin describes her commute from Carlingford to Macquarie University. Please send us details of your commute for publication in future issues.

My commute

Fran Griffin

I am fortunate enough to live only 10kms from where I work, with a very easy daily commute. In fact it is so easy it has become rather boring.

The first thing I have to do is time my departure carefully, since I have to ride past the school. Now we all know how mums drive first thing in the morning, and what kids are like when they see their friends being unloaded from cars ... bedlam on wheels combined with a stampede in uniform! Add to this a few buses, other drivers trying to get past the school and the kids and the mums and the buses... and one poor insignificant cyclist.

The trusty and ageing mountain bike has dragged me up the hill from home to the corner opposite the school. [Fran's mountain bike has since been replaced by Fabio, a sleek new road bike — Ed] Hopefully it is too early or too late for the dreaded mayhem, but somehow it always seems to be just the right time. I have become good at riding from my street, through the chicane, and up to the right turn into a back street, on the centre line with my arm out. Not riding there means I can never make the turn, not signalling means copping abuse — it's amazing what a calming effect it has on the traffic to hold your right arm out to the side for extended periods of time! Perhaps the drivers are fascinated that this is possible, or maybe they want to see how long I can



heading home in the afternoon

long I can do it, or is there some mysterious hypnotic effect it has on them?

The next challenge is the parking area for the oval behind the school, which is a favourite dumping place for the mums with really little kids. There are speed bumps too — those nasty cheaply built little sharp ones — which make my mud guard rattle against whatever it is that it rattles against, serving as a good warning for unwary pedestrians that I am coming through. Having negotiated groups of gossiping mums; pre-schoolers occasionally escaping and running feral through the car park; and the simultaneous reversing phenomenon that involves cars on opposite sides and doesn't involve the use of eyes or ears, I am finally in a nice quiet backstreet. In this street the main hazard is a cat, which I see quite often, and which likes to lie in the middle of the road. The next obstacle is the opening in the fence which leads to the footpath on Pennant Hills Road. This

The views expressed in Chain Mail articles are those of the authors only and do not necessarily represent either the common views shared by a majority of Bike North members or Bike North policy as formulated by the Bike North Executive Committee.

Chain Mail

is one of those supposedly soundproof things, but certainly not glass-proof! For a while I gave up riding through it, due to the frequency with which I met elderly pedestrians, not to mention the group of girls from the school who liked to sit there for their morning smoke.

They have recently trimmed the bushes on the other side, allowing me a greater chance of not maiming the oldies, so I am riding through it again.



beat the queue — ride a bike!

The footpath is an uneventful couple of hundred metres to the M2.

Last summer it suddenly developed a pointed mountain during one very hot day. This was quite interesting to get airborne over if you forgot it was there. It's been fixed now, so that bit of excitement is gone. The trimmed bushes take some of the challenge out too, since the path had become almost too narrow, and quite often startled parrots and miners would erupt from the flowers as I passed. I have never hit one though!

Now down to business, this is the M2 and there is a roadie just ahead. Well he usually tends to remain just ahead, and just ahead a bit further... since I am significantly out-gearred on the downhill. I have even been passed on the downhill, kept up on the flat, only to be left behind in the tunnel because the roadies I was following decided to sprint! Well so did I, in fact I sprint it every day, but I was in my highest gear pedalling twice as fast as they were, and they were still gaining (ggrrrrr!!!!).

The camaraderie on the M2 is nice — most cyclists do say hello or acknowledge from the other side, or offer assistance if you have not been sufficiently nimble to avoid the pretty crystals left by those who feel they add a certain *je ne sais quoi* to the breakdown lane.

Now which magpie should I annoy today? Will it be the nasty one in Talavera Road which chases me all the way from the M2 exit into the uni and past the roundabout in fearsome kamakaze style? His beak will be sharpened and is usually deadly accurate. I arrive with blood dripping from my forehead and ear, despite adjusting the helmet and straps to protect these areas. I do receive lots of sympathy from my colleagues on arrival though.

Or will I see if the fickle one at the Vimiera Road roundabout feels like a chase this morning? This also involves either a trip across the busy part of the campus, dodging the students, or a trip around the back of the campus, dodging the ducks, and if I'm unlucky — the other magpie!

After a day of doing whatever, it's time to play on the M2 again.

First it is the battle of the lift. There is a pair of these in my building, and they rather too frequently detain unsuspecting occupants for several hours, but fortunately so far I haven't suffered this. They also don't like stopping on my floor, and occasionally have the whim to go up instead of down. I feel very silly arriving at the top floor to watch the doors open, then close, for no reason, and then go all the way back down again.

Of course one must be stylish when cycling through the campus, especially if one meets a group of students one has just been teaching. After a wave and exchange of greetings, one should nonchalantly turn the corner, being careful to do so with one hand occupied anywhere except on the handlebars, and changing up a few gears at the same time. Try to avoid having the chain come off just at this point though, totally ruining the effect of your departure, and the state of your clean hands and gloves.

As opposed to the morning's fun descent, the afternoon's climb is tedious, especially when you get a flat in the tunnel, it's winter and nearly dark. The feeling of lethargy which often builds up during the afternoon vanishes quickly as I slalom through the pedestrians crossing from the uni to Macquarie Centre, and zip onto the M2. Has anyone ever noticed that the wind through the toll plaza is always a headwind? The afternoon ride gives me opportunity to chat with a few regulars, and sometimes ride with a colleague who goes further west. The off-ramp at Epping is often rather interesting, as there seems

to be some device affecting the operation of blinkers on cars. I've never had a real problem there however, just minor annoyance.

It's now uphill all the way, but in summer is nearly always with a tailwind. On the very hot days when the westerlies are blowing however, they are really blowing (the wrong way!). The afternoon storms are fun too. I sit in my office with eyes glued to the weather radar, trying to predict the best time to leave so I don't get hailed on or blown away. Getting wet on the way home in summer is rather pleasant, but it makes for a noisy ride — the water on the road against the tyres of passing traffic is quite loud.

Do I take the footpath or Pennant Hills Road? This depends on which part of the cycle the lights are up to. If I am lucky I can get all the way to North Rocks Road before the traffic catches me, saving a trip up the hill behind the school. In the afternoons the mums here have been either deleted or replaced by the dads and their boys doing soccer or footy training. There are also some ballet girls outside one of the school buildings. This is much easier than in the morning, then I have the reverse right turn into my street. Since it is now peak hour, the oncoming traffic is often banked up past my street, making the turn a little bit tricky.



a short cut through the fence

A zoom down the hill past my place, then a U-turn and into the driveway — it just isn't done to put on the brakes when you are achieving your maximum speed for the day, just because your driveway is coming up.

Foul weather or a winter head cold really upset things. I miss the ride each way each day, and after a few days off the bike start getting unproductive and slow(er) witted, and the metal things that grow in the soles of my feet start going rusty. Taking the stink-mobile to work is just not the same.

events!

Moo-cooboola Festival — Saturday, 3 August

Each August, Hunters Hill holds its Community Festival, "Moo-cooboola" (from the aboriginal name for this part of Sydney).

As for last year, this year's "Moo Festival" will be held on the oval of Hunters Hill High School, enter from Mount St or Reiby Rd (yes, Hunters Hill High is the school fingered for closure by the NSW Government, but still defiant!). The festival will run from 10am till 4pm, with lots of food stalls and entertainment, and with a Bike North stall and display of bikes.

Bike North will also be riding in the Moo festival parade, decorated with our usual purple, white and orange balloons. We'll be assembling at Alister Sharp's place, 11 Martin St, Hunters Hill from 8:30am. We'll leave at 10:00am for a short ride to the start of the parade. We'll be dressing as though on a long distance tour (the theme of the parade is "Outback Touring"), or for "Everyday Cycling" eg kids in school uniform with school bags, lycra-clad cyclists, businessmen in suits with briefcases, sporty persons on their way to tennis etc. All Bike North members and friends are invited to ride in the parade, and we need volunteers to help staff the stall. Contact: Alister Sharp (Hunters Hill coordinator and Bike North secretary), tel: 9879 3664; email: jollshar@zeta.org.au.

Bike North annual picnic — Sunday, 25 August

Rides — 9:30am and 9.45am

Skills — 11:00am

AGM — 12:00am

BYO picnic lunch — 12:30

Wacky races — 1:30pm

Where: Clarke's Point, Hunters Hill

The venue

Bike North holds its Annual General Meeting, otherwise known as the annual picnic, in each of its Council areas in turn. This year, it is Hunters Hills' turn again. And we'll be having our picnic (with wacky races) and AGM at Clarke's Point, Woolwich, at the far end of the Hunters Hill peninsula. You can drive or cycle (see below for details of rides to the venue), or get the ferry to Hunters Hill/Valencia St, just half a kilometre further down the peninsula.

Clarke's Point Reserve looks out across the harbour past Cockatoo Island towards Balmain. You reach it by turning right then left, just before the Woolwich Pier Hotel. If arriving by car, park in the Reserve parking area and walk 50m or so to find us in one of the grassy clearings (look for the Bike North banner). Otherwise, cycle on in past the toilet block. There are toilets, drinking water, and barbecues at Clarke's Point, with firewood provided, so bring something to cook, and

maybe a billy to make tea. Kids might like to bring a ball to kick, or a kite to fly if it is windy.

If it looks like rain, also bring a jacket; there's no shelter at Clarke's Point.

Oh, remember to bring your refreshments with you, or shop at Hunters Hill shops on the way in. Hunters Hill shops are 3km back up the peninsula, the other side of the Hunters Hill Overpass. You'll find an IGA Supermarket and Michelle's cake and pie shop in the little mall in Gladesville Rd, a few meters back from the end of Ryde Rd, and Melissa's deli has delicious Greek stuff, closer to the Overpass.

Rides to the picnic

As is our wont, Bike North has organised two rides to the picnic. One ride will be from Eastwood Station (west side) beginning at 9.30am. The other ride will be from St Leonards Station starting at 9.45am.

The meeting

The actual "AGM" part of the day will be held at 12 pm. It is important to remember that as a formal "Bicycle User Group", we have to deal with some essential bits of Bike North business. These consist of:

- confirmation of the minutes of the last AGM;
- receipt of the treasurer's report;
- receipt of the executive committee's report on the activities of the group in the last financial year; and
- last but not least, election of officers (see below).

Mindful, as we are that no-one likes formal meetings, we will keep these things brief and informal.

The positions which are up for election at the AGM are:

- President — to organise Bike North, its executive and activities;
- Vice President — to assist in the organisation and coordinating of Bike North's activities;

Wacky races for all the family!



WANTED Chain Mail EDITOR

This publication needs a new editor (as the current one is heading off to Canada and perhaps beyond for an extended holiday)! If you:

- have a good command of the English language (including sound grammar, spelling skills);
- have the ability to write simply and well;
- have good editing skills; and
- are willing to spend a little time getting involved in the workings of Bike North,

then we need you to help us collate, edit and produce this bi-monthly newsletter!

All help, advice, support and training will be provided.

Editor of bn_news list

Bike North also needs a new editor for our Weekly E-mail News.

This is related to the Chain Mail editor's job but can be a separate, discrete job. It involves taking 10-15 minutes every week collating, editing and sending the E-mail News each Wednesday.

Access to, and easy familiarity with, the Internet and email are a must.

Contact us

If you are interested or want more information for either or both positions, please contact Michael Chow or Kin-Yat Lo, You can do this by sending us an email c/-bn_editor@galifrey.triode.net.au.

- Secretary — to organise meetings and keep records of Bike North business;
- Treasurer — to manage and account for funds on behalf of Bike North;
- Advocacy Officer — to coordinate advocacy activities across Bike North;
- Rides Coordinator — to compile, submit and advertise the Bike North rides program;
- Membership Officer — to provide membership information and maintain the Bike North membership database.

It is important to remember that Bike North is not just a recreational cycling

"club". It is a Bicycle User Group with objectives related to the promotion and advocacy of cycling. The executive committee (both elected and non-elected) puts in much hard work and organising "behind the scenes" to make Bike North the thriving and successful organisation that it is.

Can you help us either as an executive committee member or in some other capacity? For any questions at all, please contact: Michael Chow 9874 1461 (h), mchow@cch.com.au; Alister Sharp 9879 3664, jollshar@zeta.org.au; Carolyn New 9438 1903, carolynn@ihug.com.au; or just have a chat on a ride with any of the current executive.

WORKING GROUPS

Hornsby

*Graeme Edwards 9476 3624
graemee@idx.com.au;
Kevin Mason 9868 2904*

Sunday, September 22 is Hornsby Earthwise Day. The purpose of Earthwise Day is to show residents of the Hornsby Shire how they can improve the sustainability of their day to day activities. This covers a wide range of areas from waste going into land fill and water conservation through to sustainable transport.

Bike North will be assisting Hornsby Council on the day by promoting the increased use of sustainable forms of transport. There will be lots of other activities on the day with a number of demonstrations showing how residents can improve the sustainability of their activities in and around the home. As it is Bike Week, we would like to see as many Bike North members on the day as possible and remember to ride your bike!

Ku-ring-gai

*Carolyn New (BN advocacy officer)
9438 1903; carolynn@ihug.com.au*

We have been waiting eagerly for the cycleways and cycle lanes (budgeted at well over \$200,000 from the RTA dollar for dollar funding) which had been promised by Ku-ring-gai Council for the 2001/02 year. We were very pleased to see the pathway alongside Ryde Road

creep down from De Burghs Bridge to the armco railing. While it is unfortunate this could not be completed this year, the unfinished section at least can be ridden. Bear in mind that it is very narrow.

With Bike North's prompting just before the end of the year, there was a flurry of construction activity in the last few days before 30 June in an effort to spend the allocated moneys — if they don't spend it, they lose it.

As a result, Killeaton Street, St Ives now boasts a 2 metre wide shared path from Benaroon Ave to the start of Link Road. I suppose we should be grateful that Ku-ring-gai Council is now spending money on bicycle projects after many years of inaction. However, this new cycleway is of limited use until the missing link along Link Road is completed. When it is, there will be a safe route to school for many students who live around that area.

Over on Bobbin Head Road, Council has marked a generous cycleway along the western side of Bobbin Head Road from Pacific Highway to Pentecost Avenue. Sadly, there is nothing more until Nambucca Street from which both sides of the road have a freshly painted cyclepath as far as Spurwood Road.

Even with the most expensive paint, there must still be a lot of dollars left over in the budget and we wait to see what else may still appear (with the help of some creative accounting to put it in last year's accounts).

Ryde

Wayne & Louise Spencer 9874 6977;

W-L_Spencer@rocketmail.com

Cyclists who regularly use some of the off road cycle routes through the Ryde area may have noticed the increasing encroachment of leaf litter, and fallen sticks and twigs on paths. This has particularly been the case on the cycleway through Darvall Park at Denistone and also on the shared pathway into the Lane Cove National Park at North Ryde. It would be appreciated if interested members, who are familiar with these problems, could write to Ryde Council requesting that these paths be cleared of debris. We have presented this issue to council on several occasions through our representation on the bicycle sub-committee but to date Council has failed to initiate any action. If you write to council, it will serve to further highlight the problem.

On other issues, the Ryde Working Group continues to work on a document outlining our preferred route for the proposed Rail Trail between Eastwood and Concord. Shortly we will have prepared a document to be sent to the RTA and Ryde Council officers involved in the design work for the project. This document will also be posted on the Bike North website.

The Ryde working group continues to work on issues relating to the improvement of cycling in the Ryde area, including the provision of bike parking; preservation of access to the road network; ensuring traffic calming devices are cycle friendly; the development of training materials to develop the skills of all cyclists; and ensuring that off road routes to be constructed by the council are appropriately engineered. There is potentially much more work than can be accomplished in the time available to members currently involved in the working group. If you would like to be involved with the Ryde Group please don't hesitate to contact Wayne or Louise.

Hunters Hill

Alister Sharp 9879 3664; jollshar@zeta.org.au

Hunters Hill Council has a "Greenspace" grant which will be used to complete a through, off-road bike route down Tarban Creek to Gladesville Bridge. The eastern end of the existing path through the Riverglades Reserve will be extended up the hill, past the recently-restored "Farm Attendant's Cottage" to join the RTA path that runs from the overpass to Riverside Girls High under Tarban Creek Bridge to Gladesville Bridge.

Council is holding over the funds it allocated to bike works last year to make a start on the Bike Plan, and is planning to use these to match RTA funding expected during this financial year.



Cycling holidays

Cycling and coffee in Western Australia

Maria Theoharous

One of the enjoyable aspects of cycling is being able to see places at a slower pace with excellent company. I spent 16 days in March touring Western Australia without my bike so I spent some time looking at the bike hire options available. I was there on our honeymoon and in the months leading up to our trip, my husband Ross kept explaining why we should leave the bikes home this time. He even left his surfboard at home but we still managed to cycle and surf without our gear.

For trip information the Lonely Planet guide and the web were good places to start, but the tourist information centres in each town were really the places in the know! I can only describe what we found in the southwest from Perth to Esperance, so sorry if you are interested in details on the Nullabor or Broome.

Perth to Fremantle

When in Perth you will think that you're in cycling heaven. Recreational cyclists will love the decision by previous public servants who have ensured that the public has access to foreshore along the Swan and Canning Rivers.

We got our hands on the "Ride Around the Rivers" cycling brochure and enjoyed a morning of cycling along the Swan River from Perth CBD to Fremantle. You can partake in a cleansing ale at the Swan Brewery on the banks of the Swan River just outside the city. The service is friendly but you'll need to come back to take home a six pack.

Hill climbing is not a prerequisite for any of these rides. It's a good way of introducing non-riders to cycling. The hire bikes were ok but I did miss my Giant. We hired out bikes from About Bike Hire — <http://perth.citysearch.com.au/EN/PERTH/0013/35/93/>.

Rottnest Island

This is a good place to take a decent mountain bike. Again the hire bikes were ok but stay on the road if you're not a thrill seeker. There were wasp warning signs across the centre of the island. Oliver Hill and the scenic lookout are a good way to test your hill climbing skills.

For the Muggaccinos, the Dome coffee house at the dock is a good place to fuel up after the ferry ride from Fremantle.

Travelling to Margaret River

On the way down from Fremantle are Mandurah, Bunbury and Busselton. Bunbury has a dolphin centre so get there in the morning and feed the dolphins. All three towns are scenic and worthy of a stop off and a wander. Bunbury also has good coffee places — another Muggaccino feature.

Do take your bike if you're thinking of visiting the Margaret River region. This area has plenty of clearly marked bike paths which wind around the wineries, so it's a real bonus! You can hire bikes in town but be careful not to drink too much if you go wine tasting.

If you have Muggaccino tendencies, you can do a return ride from Cape Naturaliste to Cape Leewin in one day. Just make sure you have a coffee at Margaret River — or stop off for a bit more wine tasting. For the beer drinker, the Bootleg Brewery in the district boasts that it's a beer oasis in a desert of wine.

Heading to Esperance

Pemberton was a great find. It's a small timber town but there were a few excellent hills and forests to explore at your (cycling) leisure. Take the time to climb the Gloucester Tree and see the view across the tops of the trees.

Albany was also a great town centre that offers coastline and inland cycling options. You can do a round trip to Denmark [That sounds like a long way! — Ed] and both have decent coffee offerings. Whale watching is a feature from June to October. The wind farm was an amazing sight to see.

Esperance was a good place to visit but make sure you fill up your car along the way. The distances between petrol stations and good coffee places increase exponentially. The bikes on offer at the tourist centre were decent mountain bikes and all were well maintained.

Whether you take a bike or not, you can still cycle in Western Australia.

Try cycling in Vietnam

Vicki Bell

I had a marvellous time cycling around Vietnam in Nov/Dec 2001 and would thoroughly recommend it to anyone looking for a place to cycle where the

scenery is spectacular, the locals incredibly friendly, and the cost of living very cheap.

Vietnam has a very troubled history, what with being colonised by the French, and then the Vietnam War, and the inherent problems a war of such magnitude and devastation leave behind. But this in its own way has created a race of people very forgiving of what has gone before, and very welcoming of foreigners now.

I flew into Hanoi and while the city is teeming with people, it has numerous parklands and is quite beautiful. One of the best experiences I had was going out walking with three friends at 5.30am one morning and coming across the local produce market where it was apparent not many tourists go. It seemed the locals were as fascinated by us as we were about what we were seeing. The market was so alive and the smells, sights and sounds were amazing. And then, on the walk back to the hotel we came across the locals in the park doing Tai Chi, playing badminton etc, and we were invited to join in, again via sign language. Each of us were "adopted" by an elderly lady who tried to teach us the moves — trust me, when they were giving out coordination I was way back in the queue. But it was a magical experience and one of 2-3 favourite memories of the holiday.

There are many remnants of the war throughout the country, but among the most interesting and moving are: the War Crimes museum in Ho Chi Minh; the Chi Chi tunnels near HCM city; and the site of the My Lai massacre. All left me feeling quite emotionally drained and my admiration of the people's tenacity, ingenuity and spirit rose immensely after visiting these sites. One of the things that struck me was that there is a noticeable absence of men aged over 50. Met many ladies aged around 70 who had lost their husbands in the war, as well as their sons. And yet, they smiled and made us so very welcome and seemed to bear no grudges.

The over-riding memory I will carry with me of Vietnamese people, apart from their forgiving and serene nature, is of cycling through the villages and the small towns, and the kids running up to you as you rode along to give you a huge smile and high 5 you, saying hello and asking your name etc.

The scenery was quite beautiful — I went expecting to see a flat country dominated by rice paddies, which it often is. But the

scenery in the highlands around Dalat was breath taking, and the scenery as we rode along the South China Sea coastline was awesome. The water was crystal clear, the beaches lovely and with only a handful of people there — million dollars views being enjoyed by so few — it was great to watch the locals fishing the old traditional way by hauling in the nets. A typhoon had hit part of the area we rode through only 5 weeks prior to us being there and the extent of the devastation was incredible — whole villages blown away, fish farms up ended, bridges and roads washed away.

The roads there are amazing — mainly dirt out of the cities, massive potholes, and no road rules — the traffic just comes at you, missing hitting you at the last possible moment — quite confronting the first couple of hours but after that I became used to it and refused to be intimidated. And it was very common to overtake motorbikes, as they move along at such a leisurely pace. Indeed, it was common for a motorcyclist who spoke some English to ride along beside you for up to 15 minutes — made me feel as if I was special and yet to me, I was the one having all the fun and loving the experience. There are some incredibly beautiful mountain passes to cycle up — tough work but the scenery more than ample reward.

Apart from my love of cycling and the fact I wanted to cycle Vietnam, one of the main aims of my holiday was to raise money for the local Fred Hollows Foundation. A visit to the Danang eye hospital to meet with Dr Binh, trained by Dr Fred Hollows in cataract surgery in 1992 was a highlight of my holiday. The reverence with which Dr Binh spoke of Dr Hollows made me feel really proud to be an Aussie. The fact that we were raising funds for the hospital made it special, as it was good to see where the money was going and the good it was doing the locals. It's a real concern that there is only one eye hospital in Central Vietnam to service 20 million people. All across Vietnam we came across lots of people with cataracts — it was sad as it's a simple operation but not available to enough people still. And in the villages the people are so poor many can't afford it even if they are aware the procedure is available — made me aware of just how much we take for granted in our daily lives.

I flew out of Ho Chi Minh City and this is one amazing city. I have travelled extensively on the sub continent but never have I encountered as many people, or as much pollution, as I did here. And yet HCM is quite beautiful — the French architecture of the Opera House, Town Hall, Rex Hotel, and the Notre Dame cathedral buildings is quite lovely. This is the only place I did not cycle in — it just seemed too chaotic and death defying for my liking.

Throughout the country I felt very safe and would have no hesitation in going back, and I think that is always a sign that you really enjoyed your holiday. So if you are thinking of cycling off the beaten track and looking for a cycling experience that is one you will long remember, what about Vietnam?

Cycling from across the Tasman

Kin-Yat Lo

Many cyclists believe that New Zealand is a good place for bicycle touring. After spending a fortnight driving, bussing, training and tramping around the North Island, I'm not so sure I'd like to go bicycle touring there.

First of all, it is **very** hilly! You seem to be forever climbing or descending gentle gradients, and much of the "flat" terrain consist of rolling hills of about 1-3km long at approximately 5% gradient. To add to this the central part of the North Island is on a plateau, and there are also lots of mountain passes (about 200-300m high) to climb to get from A to B. Riding a bike, however, gives you a better opportunity to look at the snow-capped peaks than does driving a car.

The second problem with touring in New Zealand is the roads. Most of the major highways are sealed and very well maintained (much better than Australian highways) with a wide, **sealed** shoulder on most stretches. The problem, however, is that these highways are extremely busy with cars, buses and heavy trucks all travelling at 100km/h. I wouldn't like to tour on roads like these! There are also no alternative, quieter routes in getting from A to B like there are in NSW — often the

only sealed road between towns is the major highway.

That said, Kiwi drivers appear to be a lot more courteous than Australian drivers — they are reluctant to hold you up on the highway and will slow to let you pass on straighter sections. It might be these qualities that make Kiwis more tolerant towards touring cyclists and thus make NZ a good place to indulge in bicycle touring. That, and the fact that there are lots of delightful motels and B&Bs to relax help you recover after riding up all those hills. And I'm sure the hot springs and thermal pools would be a great place to relax after a long day in the saddle.

I did find that New Zealand would be a great place to go mountain biking. The sport is more recognised across the Tasman than here — it is actively promoted by local tourism bodies and the Department of Conservation (similar to the NSW NPWS) for its national parks. There appears to be a maze of mountain biking trails *everywhere* in forests and virtually every tourist guide actively promotes mountain biking in their region. However I don't know whether these are simply fire trails only or whether there are also singletracks. It is also easy to hire good quality mountain bikes at a good price.

My friend Henry and I had originally planned to hire mountain bikes once we got to Wellington to explore the local trails which are all a stone's throw away from the CBD — the rental Toyota Tarago people mover would have made hauling bikes around very easy. I even packed my Bike North jersey and knicks! But on that day we were confronted by unseasonal weather — 13°C temperatures accompanied by heavy showers and a roaring southerly. That put paid to any riding, and we could only gaze at the trails from a warm car. Yes, it was *that* miserable!

What of cycle commuting in the big cities? Both Auckland and Wellington are car-centric cities — even more so than Sydney. Auckland, in particular, had poor public transport and its traffic jams are as bad as Sydney's — though it has less than 1/3 of the population. It also has plenty of rolling hills — its terrain is very similar to

the Ryde/Hunters Hill/Eastwood area. You simply cannot go very far without having to climb lots of hills! Providing you like climbing hills, however, commuting in Auckland does not seem that bad as there are many quiet streets to make commuting easier. And there's also a train station at Meadowbank in Auckland, although it does not have a wharf, and carrying bikes on trains are NZ\$3 per trip.

Wellington has terrain very unsuitable for commuting — it is a very hilly city full of twisty climbs with similar gradient to the top of Kissing Point Road at Turramurra, and reminds me of Hong Kong Island. You'd get a good idea if you picture Wellington CBD at Browns Waterhole and everything else at Turramurra and beyond. It must also be a wet and miserable city as most commuters used Ortlieb waterproof panniers!

Although neither cities seemed good for commuting, there appeared to be a large bicycle commuting contingent. The eastern route out of the Auckland CBD (very flat!) was full of commuting cyclists during both peaks — this was perhaps due the massive traffic jams on the roads and that a bike was infinitely faster than other modes of transport. There were also plenty of commuters on the North Shore ferry. A handful was even spotted commuting in business suits complete with polished black shoes!

While NZ is a car-centric country, it still has the culture of riding a bike down to the local shops. This is probably due to all those lovely back streets and that small corner stores and small shopping strips are still the norm rather than the exception. Most NZ towns and cities also have an abundance of marked on-road bike lanes and off-road shared paths. There were also plenty of commuting cyclists in the smaller towns — I was pleasantly surprised by the number of commuters while driving through Hamilton during the afternoon peak!

I'll most definitely pack my bike next time I fly across the Tasman and driving around the country to explore the forests and bays by mountain bike as well as the mountains on foot. It's something you should do too.

Bike bits

Training for that big ride (part 2)

Jo Clendon

In part 1 of this series of articles on training (see the last issue of Chain Mail), we looked at how to build up your "base" to allow you to ride a particular target distance. This time, we'll discuss how you can train to go faster and climb higher, and avoid overtraining.

Maintaining your base

Okay, so you've built up your base, and you are now riding longer distances of up to 35 km, and have a weekly distance of 75 km. So, where do you go to from here? It's time to look at "tuning up".

In our example, we wanted to do the Century Challenge 60 km in less than 3 hours. That means we need to ride at an average speed of 20 km per hour on similar terrain. If our example rider is currently riding hilly terrain at an average of 18 km per hour, then he/she will have to start focusing on speed and hill climbing technique. This is also where you work on the enjoying it all — by building strength, fitness and endurance, you will enjoy longer rides more (suffer less) and recover faster.

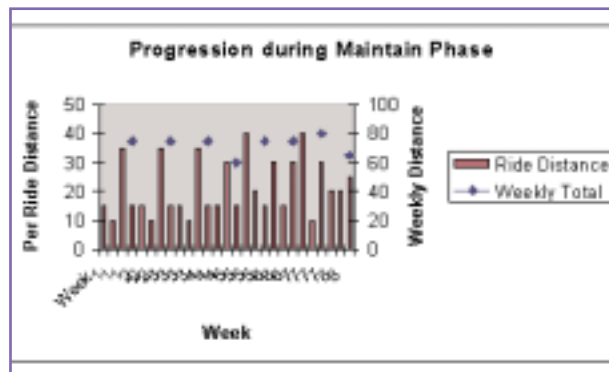
Apply the following guidelines when maintaining your base and improving your performance.

1. **Training distance.** Aim for a weekly mileage goal of 125% of your single day tour distance (see "How to work out your base" in part 1).
2. **Training frequency.** You can ride six days a week, but ensure to include at least one rest day per week. Listen to your body. Ensure that every fourth week is a rest week, along the lines spelled out in part one. Work on a three week build, one week light framework.
3. **Endurance.** Build endurance by including one long day ride per week, but you don't have to ride your full goal distance (ie you don't have to do the full 60 km in our example). It can be 50% of your goal distance. Sometimes, it can be useful to ride your goal distance ahead of time, just

to feel what it is like. However, if you are going to do this, make sure it is 2 to 3 weeks before the event so you have time to recover. Also, ensure it does not increase your total weekly training distance by more than 15% over the previous week.

4. **Speed.** Start working on your speed. Consider what improvements you need to make, and start gradually working toward them. Include some intervals of speed that add up to 10 — 15 minutes per ride. Make them fun, eg "sprint" for a certain spot, race for the lights (but not through dark green ones ...), race your cycling buddy to the next corner. This will help build up your speed. You can measure your "speed progress" by comparing how long it takes you to ride the same "course" or your average speed using a cycle computer.
5. **Pace.** Aim to be consistent throughout your ride — avoid being the hare in a comparison with the tortoise. One good way to check this is by looking at the speed on your cycle computer. Another way is on an "out and back ride" (where your ride the same course "out" as you do "back") — see if your out speed is roughly the same as your back speed. Allowing for small variations for your good friends — the hills.
6. **Condition training.** Consider the "environment" in which you will be riding on "the day", and try to mirror it with your training conditions, eg if the event you a training for is during the heat of the day, ensure you are not just training in the morning or at night when the temperature is cooler. If you will be riding a multi-day event, include some consecutive (one day after the other) longer rides. This will help toughen up your legs, and your rear, for the challenge ahead. Consider terrain, and load (if the bike will be loaded on the day, do some training with it laden). Ensure your training ground reflects the variety of terrain your tour will include. For the big ride, go find them hills and get very friendly with them!

7. **Have fun.** Remember you are doing this because you enjoy it. If you start to stop enjoying it, it is time to have a re-think. Perhaps you need to ease up on your training, look at your diet, sleep, other priorities, etc. The idea is



to enjoy a challenge — "enjoy" being the key word!

Progression during "maintain base" phase: Pre event

I am often asked by my husband (a mountain biker) "how much training should I do (or not do) in a week before an event". The best rule of thumb is to make it one of your "rest weeks". Make sure the end of the pre-event week is spent in "active recovery". This means — keep moving but keep the activity light (easy pace), and the duration short (less than 60 mins).

A word to the wise — don't overtrain

Overtraining sounds like something that happens to athletes but it can happen to recreational cyclists too. It basically comes from doing too much too soon — before your body has had a chance to adapt. Symptoms of overtraining can include: unexpected weight loss, appetite/libido/energy loss, feeling of having too many "bad rides" (when you just feel like your body isn't there for you), restless/bad sleep, irritability, increased morning "at rest" heart rate.

An obvious symptom that you want to avoid is **overuse injury**. These nasty problems appear, seemingly out of nowhere, and can have you off your bike for months. Avoid them!

Avoidance means listening to your body, increasing your training gradually and, therefore, allowing your body time to adapt. The author is currently off her bike

due to an overuse-induced knee problem — learn from her experience!

Front suspension

Hette Mollema

I went for a ride with my friend who had recently acquired a new bike — with a front suspension fork. Our short ride took us beyond the bitumen road into the National Park and onto a good quality dirt road. There were some sandstone rocks protruding into the road, but nothing so serious that could not be handled by my hybrid bike with its 700c, 35 mm tyres and a non-suspension (rigid) fork.

My friend only took up cycling again in the last few months, whereas I am a veteran, having taken up cycling again 2 years ago. You can imagine my chagrin when my novice friend just "floated" over the rocks and bumps, while the veteran spent more time airborne than on the track — and not always in full control — just to keep up.

After this ride a suspension fork became a "must-have" or life would not be worth living! Easier said than done. The quotes from various bike shops ranged from \$220 to \$400 and with varying degrees of enthusiasm on a new fork being worthwhile. It is worth bearing in mind that the bike was bought in 2000 for about \$700.

The fork is attached to the bike via the steerer that fits into the head tube. There are two sets of ball bearings at the bottom and at the top of the head tube (called the headset), which enables the steerer to rotate for steering. On some bikes there is a clamping device to stop the stem falling out, but on other bikes, like mine, there is a thread with nut plus a locking nut.

After some questioning it turned out that the bike shops' varying degrees of enthusiasm and costs were related to the ability to cut the stem to the right size and to put a thread on the stem of the fork, plus the ability to source a suspension fork for a 700c wheel. You may notice that suspension forks are mainly fitted to mountain bikes, although some newer hybrid bikes are now also factory-fitted with front suspension.

So far so good. Taking the bike home and trying it out brought to light an unexpected side effect. The new fork has raised the front end of the bike by about

50 mm due to the added height of suspension forks. This subsequently causes a change in head angle from 70 degrees to about 67 degrees and the trail from 100 mm to 115 mm. These geometry changes had the effect of changing the steering of the bike from being quite sensitive to being that of a more stable tourer. Before the modification the bike could only be ridden for a short distance without hands. The modified bike is easier to steer without hands, but still not as easy as the bikes I had when young. Clearly the front geometry is rather tricky!

The effect of the steering geometry changes were checked for the bike stability as described in "Bicycling Science" by Frank Rowland Whitt and David Gordon Wilson. The "Jones" stability criterion (page 221) shows the geometry is still in the stable section of the diagram. Testing the stability in a 60km/h downhill run has shown no ill effects.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT?

- Resounding success!!!
- Keeping the front wheel on the ground has greatly improved control of the bike and greatly improved the stability over bumpy surfaces.
- Reduced road shock transmitted to the arms and shoulders.
- The steering has improved for leisure cycling.
- The only down side so far is the energy absorbed by the suspension fork when climbing out of the saddle.
- There is no penalty while pedalling when seated. The reduced losses from road shock is balanced by the suspension energy losses when keeping the preload adjustment on the fork fairly high and by using a stiff spring.
- Front suspension is a "must-have" for me — now and in the future. Would not leave home without it!!!

TECHNICAL DETAILS

Bike: TREK 700 Cro-Moly steel frame.
Suspension fork: RST 791 TL7, adjustable suspension.

Aesthetes and athletes

Keith Griffin

Naturally one of the biggest purchases we cyclists make is a new bike. After consideration of what type of bike; which components; rims and a host of other very technical stuff, the deal is done and your lounge room (or garage) now has a shiny new steed to adorn it.

What colour is your new bike? Did you consider the colour when buying it? Did you buy it in spite of its colours because it was the bike you wanted?

Well, no matter, you're stuck with it now, and if it isn't purple or orange then you may be in trouble!

Let's examine the bike's colour a bit more. Certain colours will have certain aesthetic ramifications.

Orange — good Bike North choice.

Purple — good Bike North choice.

Red — goes faster, bad with Bike North though.

Green — very bad Bike North choice, but can be quite stylish.

Blue — very bad bike north choice, but can look very smart.

White, black, silver or grey — a total cop out!

Yellow — too bright, you'll have to wear toned down clothing.

Pink — horrible even for girls [It doesn't mean pink is slow. Paola Pezzo won Olympic gold aboard a pink Gary Fisher bike with matching pink helmet — Ed].

Maroon — a stylish version of pink.

Beige — very sad case, you need to talk to Steve Jobs — CEO of Apple Computers.

Dark colours — you'll need to liven it up with some good clothing choices.

Light colours — could be a little insipid if your clothing choice isn't very careful.

Many bikes come in multiple colours of course, and some are just going to make life really difficult when it comes to finding the perfect helmet or gloves. Almost any colour can go with black, but don't have too much black or you're cheating. Similarly with white, chrome

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and grey, make sure there is enough of some bright colour to give you an interesting challenge when accessorising. Red goes nicely with yellow, and in fact



An otherwise tasteful black and blue tyre and wheel ensemble is ruined by the red valve cover

yellow goes very well with blue or green, but you must not have blue and green together!

Pink doesn't go at all so just avoid it. Maroon goes well with beige, so avoid this also. Red and blue is a good choice, since if you go fast enough these could blend into Bike North purple or may appear as the opposite ends of a 'red-shift' effect!

Three colours can get very messy, so avoid this if possible. There are some classic trios like red, white and blue for example, but in general it's just too much. Bikes are simple enough things and there is no need to complicate them with too many colours.

The next step of course is to buy suitable clothing and other accessories for the shiny new bike. Gloves, helmet, jersey, knicks, wet weather gear, shoes, lights, small and large panniers, backpack, bar tape... the list goes on!

You may already have some of these things of course if this is not your first bike and this means you will need to have a bigger budget than you thought, as well as extra wardrobe or drawer space to store the new stuff. It is just not done to wear old stuff on a new bike!

Many accessories do not come in a wide range of colours, so your bike needs to have at least one of the common colours on it or you will be stuck. This is where Bike North can help greatly as it must be

the only cycling group to provide clothing items to match orange or purple bikes. It's just a shame that neither of these is very common as a bike colour!

Visibility is always a key issue when choosing clothing items, but make sure you can defend your colour choices on aesthetic grounds as well. Take care when riding if you choose to include red in your ensemble, since we know red ones go faster. This means that it is possible that the red parts of your bike, clothing etc, may go faster than the rest, and things could get a bit messy!

To exemplify all this I take liberty in describing my own recent dilemmas. My Greenspeed trike used to be red, but that frame cracked (see above warning!) and my new one is green. For a while I persevered with the red helmet, but luckily it was ageing rather fast. Recently I bought a new road bike, and for budgetary and bike sizing reasons I had no colour choice – it is painted in the red, white and blue colours that used to adorn Lance Armstrong's US Postal Service bikes, or pretty much – not a choice I would normally have made (three colours). This of course screams at my green trike with yellow seat, and as a result I needed some way to allow them to coexist in the garage. Yellow looks OK on the road bike and the shoes I bought for it have a fetching splash of yellow on the Velcro strap, so I could at least keep the peace when the bikes were parked.

Similarly Fran's trike is blue, (and so is her new road bike!) so the yellow of the two trike seats keeps the blue and green far enough apart. To my amazement I found a very good helmet in red, white and blue, so that worked well, and the gloves I never wear on the trike are red and match the rims of the road bike perfectly! Knicks and jersey were more difficult, but I found some nice blue knicks and with a plain yellow top (remember there is yellow on the shoes) this looks both safe and stylish

on the upright. The blue knicks are of course horrible on the green trike, so I bought some green and yellow ones for that!

In recent years there has developed a trend for tyres and rims to be coloured. Naturally the colour of both needs to match or pick up a highlight colour from the bike. However the coloured sides on tyres seems largely restricted to road bikes, so this may provide a good reason to avoid buying a mountain bike for which such excellent accessories are just not available. [Vredestein and Michelin do make MTB tyres in multiple colours – even red! And Hutchinson's popular Gold series has yellow tread – Ed]

In all this, don't forget the little things. What colour is the valve cover? Does it match or are you cheating by using black? What colour is your water bottle and cage? Panniers can be very difficult to match, as can wet weather clothing, so you may well decide to have a yellow and black bike (a \$9,000 Pinarello should do it!) to sport a good colour scheme even in the wet and on tour!



Even a cat can tell that one of these cycles does not match the others

So, take great care in choosing your bike colours, and make sure that you are able to accessorise in a way which makes you a model of good taste on our roads. **We must, after all, look better than all those dull suits in smoggy coloured cars.**

August

Date: Sun 04/08/2002

Ride: Concord for Cake
 Grade: Easy Distance: 26
 Contact: Michael Chow, 9874 1461
 Starts at: 8:30. Meadowbank wharf. Ride along the PVC over Silverwater bridge to Olympic Park, then on to Concord for Gelato / coffee / cake. Ride back to Meadowbank a different way. Don't forget your Le Palme cap if you have one!

Date: Sun 04/08/2002

Ride: St Leonards to North Head
 Grade: Medium Distance: 45
 Contact: Joan Kerridge, 9909 8925
 Starts at: 7:30. St Leonards station concourse. Stretch those muscles on some north side hills – mostly on quiet roads and cycle paths through Beauty Point, over Spit bridge to Balgowlah and Manly. Admire the view from the coffee shop at North Head then return on a similar route.

Date: Sat 10/08/2002

Ride: Go Wollongong Wandering
 Grade: Easy Medium Distance: 50
 Contact: John Williams, 9988 4478
 Starts at: Travel by train to Wombara for a fairly flat, very scenic coastal ride to Oak Flats, mostly on cycle ways. Lunch at historic Windang Bowling Club. Phone for details.

Date: Sat 10/08/2002

Ride: Twin Peaks
 Grade: Easy Medium Distance: 35
 Contact: Ross Thomas, 9481 0724
 Starts at: 8:30 Turramurra stn east side. Ride to the two viewing points over the Cowan Creek Valley. Some gravel road, ride or walk 1.5km each view point. Skinny tyres not recommended. Phone for track conditions.

Date: Sun 11/08/2002

Ride: A to Z and Beyond
 Grade: Easy Medium Distance: 30
 Contact: Rick Mockridge, 0418 284 052
 Starts at: 7:30. Artarmon Station East side. A pleasant morning ride through parts of Artarmon and Willoughby for magnificent coastal views at Balmoral. After coffee climb to Middle Head for a fast coast to the Zoo Wharf, hop on a ferry to the Quay then ride back via the Bridge, North Sydney and Willoughby on designated cycle routes.

Date: Sat 17/08/2002

Ride: Reverse Bobbin Head
 Grade: Easy Medium Distance: 25
 Contact: Graeme Edwards, 9476 3624
 Starts at: 8:30. Hornsby stn west side: Ride via Wahroonga and Turramurra to Bobbin Head for coffee, returning up the steep way to Mt Colah and back to Hornsby.

Date: Sun 18/08/2002

Ride: Meadowbank to Millennium Markers
 Grade: Easy Distance: 28
 Contact: Jenny Hart, 9816 2968
 Starts at: 7:30. Starts at Memorial Park, Meadowbank Crescent Meadowbank. Cross John Whitton bridge to Homebush Bay, visiting the Millennium Markers, with a coffee stop included. Most hills optional.

Date: Sun 18/08/2002

Ride: Brunch at Warriewood
 Grade: Hard Distance: 90
 Contact: Phil Johnston, 9312 3319
 Starts at: 8:15. Starts at: 8:15am St Ives car park, Mona Vale Rd opp Stanley St. Cycle via Terry Hills, Duffy's Forest, West Head, Church Point and Warriewood. Return via Wakehurst Parkway. ETR St Ives 1:30pm

Date: Sun 18/08/2002

Ride: Chatswood to the Surf
 Grade: Easy Medium Distance: 41
 Contact: Carolyn New, 9438 1903
 Starts at: 8:00. Chatswood Stn west side. Ride the back roads and cycle ways to The Spit, Seaforth and Queenscliff, then Manly for coffee and cake before returning to Chatswood. Hills! Yes, a few, grades and pace easy. Roads are quiet, the views magnificent.

Date: Sat 24/08/2002

Ride: Pie in the Sky
 Grade: Easy Medium Distance: 38
 Contact: Graeme Edwards, 9476 3624
 Starts at: 8:00. Hornsby Station west side: ride along the old Pacific Highway to the café overlooking Brooklyn for morning tea and great views. Back track to Hornsby. Some moderate hills.

Date: Sun 25/08/2002

Ride: Bike North Annual General Meeting
 Grade: Easy Distance: 15
 Contact: Michael Chow, 9874 1461
 Starts at: See page 3 for details

Date: Sat 31/08/2002

Ride: Bays & Foreshores
 Grade: Easy Medium Distance: 33
 Contact: Kevin Mason, 9868 2904
 Starts at: 7:40. Meadowbank Wharf. Ride to Gladesville Bridge, then follow the bays and foreshores around to Concord for a coffee stop.



September

Date: Sat 07/09/2002

Ride: Concord for Cake
 Grade: Easy Distance: 26
 Contact: Michael Chow, 9874 1461
 Starts at: 7:30. Meadowbank wharf. Ride along the PVC over Silverwater bridge to Olympic Park, then on to Concord for Gelato / coffee / cake. Ride back to Meadowbank a different way. Don't forget your Le Palme cap if you have one!

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Date: Sun 08/09/2002
Ride: Marramarra Meander by MTB
Grade: Easy Distance: 20
Contact: Pam and Col Kendrick, 9872 2583
Starts at: 9:00. End of Bloodwood Rd Fiddletown. Easy MTB ride along Cobah Ridge in Marramarra National Park. Slow pace, suitable for beginners. BYO morning tea. Ring for details.

Date: Sun 15/09/2002
Ride: Meadowbank to Millennium Markers
Grade: Easy Distance: 28
Contact: Jenny Hart, 9816 2968
Starts at: 7:30. Starts at Memorial Park, Meadowbank Crescent Meadowbank. Cross John Whitton bridge to Homebush Bay, visiting the Millennium Markers, with a coffee stop included. Most hills optional.

Date: Sun 15/09/2002
Ride: Willoughby Spring Festival Rides
Grade: Easy Distance: 15
Contact: Carolyn New, 9438 1903
Starts at: Rides of various grades to showcase the scenic, historic and cycle delights of Willoughby. Ring for details.

Date: Sun 15/09/2002
Ride: Brunch at Whale Beach
Grade: Hard Distance: 75
Contact: Phil Johnston, 9312 3319
Starts at: 8:00. Starts: 8:00am St Ives car park Mona Vale Rd opp Stanley St. A brisk ride via Terry Hills, Church Point, Mona Vale and Newport for brunch at Whale Beach. ETR 1:00pm

Date: Sat 21/09/2002
Ride: ww.4coffee.u.come.2
Grade: Easy Medium Distance: 46
Contact: Ross Thomas, 9481 0724
Starts at: 8:30. Manly ferry wharf: Ride up the Wakehurst Parkway to Narrabeen, then Warriewood and return via the beaches. Some cycle ways and main roads with some hills.

Date: Sun 22/09/2002
Ride: Hornsby Earthwise Day
Grade: Easy Distance: 5
Contact: Graeme Edwards, 9476 3624
Starts at: 10:00. Join the BN Hornsby working group on Hornsby Earthwise Day at the Earthwise Cottage 21 Britannia St, Pennant Hills. Come along and see how you can make your activities more sustainable. Use sustainable transport to get to the cottage (ride your bike). There will be free bicycle inspections by a qualified bike mechanic. Information on cycling facilities in and around the Hornsby Shire will also be available plus live entertainment and workshops on sustainability. It all starts at 10am and goes through to 2pm.

Date: Sat 28/09/2002
Ride: Pie in the Sky
Grade: Easy Medium Distance: 38
Contact: Graeme Edwards, 9476 3624
Starts at: 8:00. Hornsby Station west side: ride along the old Pacific Highway to the café overlooking Brooklyn for morning tea and great views. Back track to Hornsby. Some moderate hills.

Date: Sun 29/09/2002
Ride: City Circle
Grade: Easy Distance: 25
Contact: Joan Kerridge, 9909 8925
Starts at: 7:30. Artarmon Stn east side or Cycle steps Milsons Point. Ride the historical areas of Sydney CBD including Harbour Br., The Rocks, Darling Harbour, Paddy's Mkt., Kings Cross and Woolloomooloo with coffee stop at Cook & Philip Pk.

Date: Sun 29/09/2002
Ride: Lunch at Pearl Beach
Grade: Hard Distance: 85
Contact: Phil Johnston, 9312 3319
Starts at: 8:00. Starts: 8:00am Hornsby stn Jersey St. A brisk ride over Mt White to Kariang then on to Pearl Beach for lunch. Continue to Woy Woy stn for 1:26pm train back to Hornsby. ETR 2:06pm.



All persons joining our rides do so as volunteers in all respects and as such accept sole responsibility for any injury howsoever incurred and Bike North and the appointed ride contacts cannot be held liable in respect of any injury or damage resulting from participants engaging in any such ride activity. Riders under 16 must be accompanied by a cycling adult carer. An SAA approved helmet is legally required by all participants on all rides. Essential equipment also includes a bicycle in good working order, water bottle and a good sense of fun. Money, tasty snacks, a tyre pump, a tube and/or repair kit and appropriate tools are recommended as well, but you can usually borrow them if necessary.