

## Lithgow Panorama – a delightful 200km ride from Lithgow to Bathurst and return

<http://www.brytonsport.com/mapTrackView?id=5145699>



The view from the aptly named Mount Panorama

The weather forecast was good leading up to the ride, 20% chance of 1-5mm rain, with a hot day (by Lithgow standards of mid 20s) and a gentle 5-10km/h breeze from the north moving to the west in the afternoon... perfect for the return leg!

Awoke at 4:30am to hear the wind whooshing through the distant trees, thinks: "That doesn't sound encouraging!"

Six riders had registered for the ride, and all departed around 6:11am, to be greeted by a 40km/h crosswind when leaving Lithgow. The Bureau of Meteorology reported 40km/h northerly wind with 80km/h gusts, but at least it wasn't cold!

The first downhill, to the Lake Lyell dam, was undertaken with caution due to the wind, a waste of a -10% grade, then followed by an undulating climb that crept up to 16%. It was good to see Geoff in the distance walking the steepest part, later claiming his 'gears were too high'. By this time Garry and Terry (from Forbes) were well out of sight, haring ahead at their usual pace, while Robert and Michael on their touring bikes dropped off the back. They had ridden up from Sydney the day before.



Between Tarana and Brewongle, at 38.5km

Through the sleepy village of Tarana, following the railway. One rider later commented that "following

the railway should have been flat"; unfortunately no one told the grader driver when he was setting out the road! However, the scenic route along quiet back roads provided compensation.

Closer to Bathurst the road flattened out and the rain increased, but at least it wasn't cold!



Tarana Rd, at 60km

The country opened providing panoramic views of the approaching rain, and by Bathurst the rain had become quite heavy. I had decided to stop at the hamburger hut at Kelso and caught up with Geoff polishing off the last of a hamburger with the lot – "Make that another one, mate". We provided some light entertainment for the locals, and the shop owner didn't seem to mind us sitting there dripping on his floor, although he did mop underneath us at one stage.

Then as the rain eased, it was off into the traffic through Bathurst and a 'hot lap' of Mount Panorama. OK a slow lap, climbing the 10% grade and slow down through the 'esses' and around the last turn onto Conrod Straight wasting the -13% at that point. There had been V8 races the previous weekend leaving plenty of rubber on the road. I had ridden the circuit before in the dry and overtaken a motorcycle through the 'esses' and a bus on Conrod Straight, but not today, only reaching 70km/h.



Wayde and Geoff at the hamburger hut

Leaving Mount Panorama proved a problem for Robert and Michael due to a missing road name sign at the turn onto Havannah St, and a heavy downpour that severely reduced visibility of the road and their Garmin. However, they soon realised and returned to the route.

From here, it was out through Perthville to be overtaken by Geoff, then onto the poorly named Cow Flat Rd (I saw plenty of cows but none of them were flat). There being no traffic I made a stop for nature, and the police arrived (great timing), but they had had reports of some cattle on the road charging at cars. Cow Flat Rd initially follows Queen Charlottes Creek then takes a 6km climb over Rockley Mount. It was at the start of the climb that I again caught Geoff, he had a slow leak in the rear tyre, and I could see him pull off the road and lay the bike down in a clearing. By the time I arrived he was doing a funny Germanic dance, slapping at his legs and feet – he had put the bike down on a [meat ant](#) nest and they had swarmed over the bike and up his legs in a few seconds. Now I know why he climbs hills so well, I wouldn't sit on the saddle either with all those ants!

Then the sweet downhill of Rockley Road, where my biddon cage decided it didn't want to go any further, and Robert and Michael caught us making repairs. Onto Ryans Lagoon Rd through to The Lagoon, and down to Chifley Dam and the second checkpoint. We passed Garry and Terry about 5km from the dam, climbing back out. They had taken a wrong turn at The Lagoon and ridden almost back to Bathurst before realising they were off track, adding 20km to their ride.

A short stop at Chifley Dam, leaving the checkpoint after cut-off. Michael's rear tyre wanted to stay longer, and in a 'no-arguments' voice he told us to continue on without him, he didn't want to ruin our chances of completing the challenge (thanks Michael). Guiltily we left... Geoff haring off leaving

Robert and I behind, again. Perhaps we should have stayed and assisted, or navigated as Michael missed a turn adding 20km to his ride.

Turn right onto Lagoon Rd, more undulations to the end of the road, then right onto Beaconsfield Rd, past the O'Connell Hotel and onto Mutton Falls Rd to Tarana. Geoff overtook us on Mutton Falls Rd while we were climbing yet another hill. Hmm, where did he come from? We hadn't passed him. Geoff had turned left at Beaconsfield Rd and happened to find a coffee shop in O'Connell; he will have to fit cup holders to his bike so he can properly fulfil the role of 'domestique'...



Robert and panoramic view, Lagoon Rd at 135km

A quick stop at the Tarana Hotel for some water. Interestingly they asked if I wanted any cooking oil... what?

A check of the time and continue on to catch up with Robert. It was at the 166km mark that Robert stopped to take a photo of one of the downhills, with the road disappearing before climbing steeply again. Around the 170km mark I had to walk the 8% part of a longer climb, come on legs you were riding 16% earlier today!

I had been concerned with the time running out, due to my slow pace up hills, nothing unusual there, and would decide at the end of Tarana Rd (172km) whether to take the short cut home back through South Bowenfels or continue on. It would be 18km taking the short cut, or 28km following the route through Rydal and Wallerawang. At the decision point, Robert and I decided to continue with the ride and try to make it in time, it would be tight. To celebrate the decision the clouds opened and gave us a good drenching – but at least it wasn't cold!



Wayde and the 'disappearing' Tarana Rd, at 166km

Down to the village of Rydal, up and over the Great Western Hwy and down into Wallerawang to the checkpoint. Refill water and off, back to the highway and the last climb of the day, only 2.5km with a max 6%. But how was the time going, would we make it? 18:58 and starting the climb, I was out of energy, grinding up the last climb at 7km/h with Robert disappearing in front. 19:11 finally starting downhill, last hill done with 7km to go. Now down to the Marrangaroo flat, the flatter roads that I am used to, more rain (but at least it wasn't cold!), catch Robert and up the speed 30+km/h on the flat, but dreadfully slow on the undulations... How is the time going? We should make it, just.

Reached the end at 19:27, only 3 minutes to spare, Geoff beating us in by 20 minutes. Garry and Terry were well gone, already driving back to Forbes. Michael was still out there, somewhere.

As it transpired, only three of the six riders completed the ride, although all did at least 200km. Garry and Terry had reached the end of Tarana Rd and were hit by a thunderstorm, their third for the day, and visibility of about 20m. With failing lights they decided it would be safer to take the short cut home. Michael also took the short cut home as he was well out of time due to the recurring puncture and a 20km detour, getting back after 9pm. Despite a navigational issue in Wallerawang, Geoff made it back with time to spare.

And the cooking oil? Garry had a squeaking crank and had asked at the Tarana hotel for some oil, cooking oil, anything, even out of the deep fryer, just stop the squeaking.

With the 10-minute time adjustment due to the late start, Robert and I made it 13 minutes before cut off – what was I worrying about?

Now, about my vow to toughen the ride up for next year...