

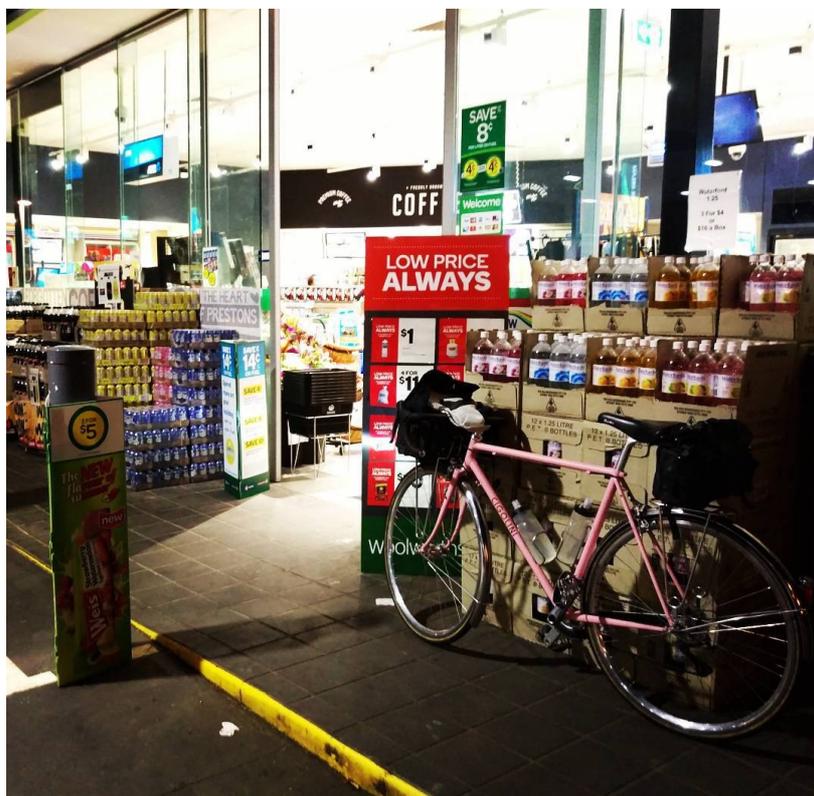
Dam Blue Hills NYE Night Ride Report – Rob Berry

After setting myself the goal of achieving the Year Round Randonneur award for the season, it looked like I was going to fail at just the second month. A busy December full of other commitment meant that I was running out of time to complete the required brevet. Cutting it fine, I had planned a permanent ride on the 30th, the Dam Blue Hills, but then life intervened again and I had to move it to the 31st. I rose early and got myself out to Baulkham Hills on the train and then a 10km ride to the start line to begin the official kilometres at 7am. I only lasted another 10km before bad stomach cramps had me on the side of the road and then back on the train. I returned to bed for most of the day, disappointed that I had tripped up at such an early hurdle.

By the afternoon I was feeling better, though, and it dawned on me that all was not lost. It was still December for a few more hours, I had no plans for the evening other than to avoid the crowds and there was time to get to the start line and give the ride another shot. I headed back out to the western suburbs and, at just after 9pm with fireworks going off in the distance, I started riding out from Baulkham Hills again.

The roads were very quiet, everyone was clearly already settled down to their planned new year celebrations, and I made good time. I was quickly on to the M7 cycle path, which was more or less totally deserted (I saw three other cyclists and no pedestrians at all for around 30km).

After just under three hours of riding, as the clocks struck midnight, I found myself having a break at the first checkpoint, a petrol station in Prestons. I can't say I ever thought of it as a place to see in the new year, but the caffeinated beverage was welcome.



Happy new year!

From there the route headed west to Warragamba. The roads were basically deserted, the only difficulty being negotiating some gravel tracks in Bent Basin (I got off and walked). At 2am I did speak to one person in Warragamba, the next checkpoint, who was looking for his lost dog, spooked by the fireworks. I hadn't seen them, unfortunately.



Warragamba is pretty quiet at 2am.

I took to the empty roads again as the route turned north. There were signs of life (perhaps not intelligent life, though) at the McDonalds in Penrith where, at 4am, I dodged my way through an all-in brawl involving about 20 people to use the bathroom. From there I faced the only real climb of the day, up to Springwood. I did it more or less alone. As I took a break in Springwood the black sky began to lighten.



Signs of life and light in Springwood.

The highlight of the ride was definitely the descent from Springwood down through Hawkesbury Heights. I almost hit 70km/h on the

descent, though I did stop to take a picture of the sun rising over the Nepean. This road is a pleasure to descend (maybe not to climb) at any time, but as the sun crept over the horizon it was just golden. Well worth the 9 hours of effort to get to this point.



Golden sunrise over the Nepean.

The last 40km of the day were straightforward, heading north through Richmond to Windsor and then back in to Sydney on Windsor Road. The stomach complains that let me to abort the first attempt of the ride returned in the last 30km, but with some more caffeine in the system I pushed through it and finished up back at Baulkham Hills, where Rob the ride organiser found me lying on my back on his front lawn just before 9am. For an overnight 200km ride I was happy to finish within 12 hours.



Dam Blue Hills 200 NYE

by Rob Berry

204.8km +2590 / -2586m



Details	Metrics	Graphs
204.8km DISTANCE	2,590.8m ELEVATION GAIN	
11:42:26 DURATION	69.8km/h MAX SPEED	
22.1km/h AVG SPEED	470 WAM	

December (just) brevet complete!

As someone who sees a long ride as a form of meditation, there is great appeal to riding through the night. With little need to interact with others and the tunnel vision provided by headlights cutting through a pitch black night, focus is more easily directed towards body and breath. The disruption to your circadian rhythms will knock you around a bit for a few days, though, but during a holiday period that isn't as much of a concern. I have a feeling I will make the NYE Night Ride a recurring event, what better way is there to see in a new year than doing something you love?