

Chattin'



Chains

Volume 33 Issue 3 July 2019

President

Steve Ottaway
0409 295 877

Secretary

John Bailey
0403 159 501

Treasurer

Graham Baws
0417 901 875

Ride Captain

Brian Smith
0481 060 655

Editor

Vicki Richards
0412 767 790

vickirics@optusnet.com.au

Club postal address

3 The Bulwark, Willetton WA 6155

Club web site

O55Perth.bike

Committee Buzz

- New ride leaders and tailenders to be encouraged and supported.
- Safety and Advocacy roles to be undertaken by Brian Smith(Safety) & John Morhall (Advocacy).
- Moving towards a "cash free" organisation.
- Muresk dates changed to October 1-6 to avoid extra expense incurred with long weekend. Richard and Bernadette Brooke-Smith to be Camp Organisers.
- The use of mirrors be emphasised by adding a recommendation on the membership application form.
- The 35th Anniversary Ride approved as a Club event.
- Proposal to enable members to order badges online.
- First Aid courses to be offered to members.
- Consideration be given to conducting another survey to gauge members' view on club direction.
- Burswood venue will have limited access throughout year dependent upon Stadium program.

President's Report *Steve Ottaway*

Since the last meeting the club has conducted a very successful Presentation Day for the Achievement Rides and a club BBQ. My sincere thanks go to each and every club and committee member who planned, organised and conducted an excellent day.

As I endeavour to carry out the duties of President I am impressed by the support and knowledge sets of all members of the committee. We have been involved in discussions about the following: 2019 Christmas Function, Safety (and the By Laws), First Aid training, member access to Member Lists, towards a Cashless Club and Electric Bikes and their place in our club.

Treasurer's Report *Graham Baws*

Bank balances at month end:

Account	April	May
Current	3,555	3,604
Deposit	<u>17,843</u>	<u>17,858</u>
Total	<u>21,398</u>	<u>21,462</u>

The Super Tuesday bike count generated \$1,680 for the club. Thanks to all who participated and to the member who suggested we follow-up all attendees. That produced \$180 we might have foregone.

We have started the move to eliminating the receipt and handling of cash. For those who want to pay with cash, please deposit these amounts into the club's account through any branch of BankWest. Deposit slips are available at club meets on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Ride Captain's Report *Brian Smith*

Ride Captain's Report for May 2019

PERIOD	RIDERS	KILOMETRES
May 2019	1,048	58,694
YTD 2019	5,601	310,846
May 2018	1,081	61,904
YTD 2018	5,403	292,357
May Variance	decrease of 33	decrease of 3,210
YTD Variance	increase of 198	increase of 18,489

Note: 2018 figures include the wheat belt tour in May 2018. There was not an equivalent ride in 2019.

Five accidents were recorded for the month of May, all attributed to rider error. There were a further three accidents in the first half of June.

On a visit to Busselton last week, I rode with the Geographe club and discussed the number and type of accidents that they experience. Was advised that they have an infrequent number of accidents and they seem to occur towards the end of rides when riders are becoming fatigued and generally relate to touching wheels. The rides conducted by the club involve long straight roads, few intersections and not as much traffic as we experience. In other words, there are fewer hazards to negotiate.

The issue of fatigue is interesting as it can relate to:

- Riding in too high a group
- Not being physically well on the day
- Not riding as often as required to maintain fitness

Ride Committee Meeting 1st May 2019

A full report prepared by myself and Keith McBurnie can be found towards the end of this newsletter.

Membership *Mike Lewis*

An email was sent to all members asking them to check their details (address, phone number/s, emergency contact name and phone numbers) and advise if any of these have changed. Almost 120 people replied, around 100 of whom had changes to one or more of their details.

If you change your details at any time, please let the Secretary or Membership Officer know by sending them an email. Contact details are on the website.

In another sign of a possible emerging trend, three people requested a change to their age, no doubt inspired by the American who recently went to court seeking to have his age changed from 69 to 49. In our three cases though, the people were asking to have their ages changed to over eighty, no doubt in an attempt to save themselves the \$25 annual subscription. All three requests were denied.

Current member status as at 12/06/2019

Financial	339	(323 – 2018)
OE	34	(35)
OE/S	12	(5)
S	12	(11)
Total	397	(374)

Recent new or returning members: John Peters, Rauno Jarvinen, Simon Gatehouse, Kathryn Ryder, Tom Thomas.

Merchandise *Shirlene Scanlan*

Consistent demand for badges for new and current members. Email sent out requesting members to pay online prior to pick up. Sam is currently replacing older models that are defective.

There are very few orders for the winter jerseys and wind vests.

Request for online payment is being well received.

I would like to suggest that members be able to order their club badge online.

Advocacy Report *John Morhall*

The pending merger of Bicycling Western Australia and West Cycle has thrown both organisations into a hiatus. The proposed Advisory Committee which I have been nominated as the Club's representative has not met and is obviously pending finalisation of the merger. Since the organisations share a common venue, this will hopefully not take long.

I have called regularly, visited their offices to obtain updates and safety pamphlets, requested a meeting with the CEO of West Cycle and asked to be put on their mailing list to no avail.

Welfare Officer *Kevin Davies*

6 Cards sent and 15 Calls made as at 12th June.

DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMENTS OR ISSUES WITH REGARD TO E-BIKES RIDING WITHIN OUR CLUB. THE COMMITTEE WILL BE ASKING FOR MEMBER FEEDBACK ON THIS TOPIC IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

Going cashless. Going, going...

After the April meeting of your committee, we announced the club would cease accepting cash payments in favour of direct deposits into our bank account.

Well we, or rather you, are making really good progress. Payments for subscriptions, merchandise etc, are all being made directly into our bank account. This is a big help to members of the committee who would otherwise have to accept, receipt and bank this cash. And it has improved the level of security.

Many members pay over the internet, but if you still wish to pay by cash, simply go to any Bankwest branch with the cash and deposit it to our account quoting our:

BSB: 302-162 Account number: 0969494

and provide your **name** and a **brief description** such as 'Sub', 'Merch', 'Xmas' etc.

Forms showing this information are available at the notice board at club meets on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Questions? Please email **Graham Baws** at treasurer@o55cc.perth.

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS DAY MAY 2019

There was a full house at Raphael Park clubrooms post-ride on Wednesday 15th May for the presentation of the 2019 Achievement Ride badges. Most categories were well represented and participants happy to smile for the camera. A fitting addition to the Awards presentation was an acknowledgement of Nic Van Koningsbrugge and his dedication to the Club over 26 years. Nic had indicated his intention to relinquish his leadership role and Thea gave a lovely and fitting speech acknowledging his services and what a fantastic Ride Leader he had been over the years; that he and Margaret were a first in the Club when they met and married; and when Nic Jnr joined, they were the first Club father and son riders.



Nic and Margaret were both great club members, always enjoyed the social outings and hosted many a morning tea at their place.

Nic gave a short speech thanking everyone and saying how he and Margaret had enjoyed being members and that he intended to continue.

Congratulations by Ride Leader Brian and President Steve were given to the badge recipients - 8 participants who were in attendance to receive their 4 Dams badges, the 4 riders to be acknowledged for completing the 200k challenge, 8 for the 150k and 11 participants for the 100k badge. And there were others to be commended who could not be there on the day.

Photo credits: John Bailey



YES WE ARE TOURING

GET READY-GET EXCITED-BREAK OUT YOUR TENTS,
START PLANNING

Perth to Busselton Cycling Tour Sunday May 3rd to Wednesday May 6th 2020

Arrangements are well under way for a fantastic tour. We will overnight in Pinjarra the first night, then Harvey, Bunbury and Busselton riding through country roads, farm lands, forests and small townships.

Distances and back-up vehicles have been organised to cater for all rider abilities.

The ride will officially end in Busselton, however, there will be an option to ride back to Bunbury to catch a train back to Perth on Thursday 7th May.

Breakfast and dinner will be fully catered and morning tea supplied en route.

Volunteers will be called for to form a sub-committee to assist with the management of the event. Further information on this will be in the August edition of this newsletter and on the website. Rob Wallace will be the O55 executive committee member to sit on this subcommittee.

Please register your expression of interest to: Nigel Egginton 0438498722 : egg.nige@bigpoond.com



Vale Barry Lees

Our Club member Barry passed away on 18/03/2019 after a brave battle. He leaves behind his loving wife Fiona, herself a Club member, and his children Michael, John, Edward and Caroline and his young grandchildren. Many of our long-time members will remember Barry as an energetic member, an all-round lovely man, with his friendly welcoming handshake and willingness to shepherd the strays on any Saturday morning ride from Carine. He and Fiona made many friends during his time with the Club and it is with sadness we recognise his untimely death.



bicycles for humanity.com
PERTH • WESTERN AUSTRALIA

City of Swan Bike in the Valley

As part of Bike Week, B4H WA participated in the City of Swan Bike in the Valley event on April 28. It was a great opportunity to raise awareness in the community of who we are and what we do. Following on from Bike Week, National Volunteer Week (20-26 May) was the 2019 annual celebration to acknowledge the generous contribution of our Volunteers.

B4H WA was a feature story in the Community Newspapers during Volunteer Week. You can read how we are changing the world two wheels at a time.

<https://www.communitynews.com.au/eastern-reporter/news/changing-lives-a-bike-at-a-time/>

From the Board to the Management Committee to the Workshop and Regional Hubs, as well as our drop-off locations superstars, B4H WA is a wholly volunteer run organisation. We take this time to especially thank all the volunteers in the B4H WA family who give their time to be a part of what we do. Without you we would not have achieved what we have and empowered so many lives and communities abroad as well as here in WA.

Would you like to join the B4H WA team? Be a part of a grassroots movement that is making a difference changing the world two wheels at a time. We currently have the following volunteer opportunities:

Display & Event Coordinator

Do you enjoy Events Coordination? Then this role could be you. This is an interesting and rewarding community job promoting the B4H Project. Current events for 2019 have been confirmed with support provided by our amazing volunteer Ian Thomas, through partnering in attendance at all events to help the new incumbent settle in. Expressions of interest can be emailed to info@b4hwa.com

Bike Workshop Manager: If you love bikes why not volunteer for a service that makes a difference using bikes. Click on the link provided for details: <https://www.volunteer.com.au/volunteering/opportunity/130701/bike-workshop-manager>

Social Media: Do you love social media? Are you a Facebook and Instagram user? Then we would love to hear from you. We are seeking a social media buff to volunteer an hour or two a week to post news stories, pictures and event details on our Facebook and Instagram accounts. Expressions of interest can be emailed to info@b4hwa.com

Workshop Volunteering

We always need extra hands. Whether you're interested in helping out collecting bikes or joining in one of our packing days or have other skills that could benefit the project, please get in touch on info@b4hwa.com. We'd love to hear from you – or you can turn up at our workshop in Middle Swan each Tuesday and Friday and every second Sunday of the month any time between 9 am to 1 pm and ask for Jamie Brindle, our Project Coordinator, and he will show you the ropes. Hope to see you there.

Ed's Note: The May 2019 edition of the B4H WA Newsletter makes good reading. It can be found by opening this hyperlink:

<https://mailchi.mp/ffad51710325/b4hwa-plans-for-the-future-newsletter-may-495695?e=b83ecf91d7>

Parking fees introduced at Deepwater Point from Monday 15th July 2019

RIDE COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES - 1ST MAY 2019

Ride Captain: Brian Smith

Deputy Ride Captain: Keith McBurnie

1. *The Ride Captain stated that there was a need to change the safety culture in the Club, and that he would be looking at the development of safe riding initiatives. The Ride Leaders were responsible for the management of safe riding practices within the various groups. He indicated that the Club needed to enforce the safe riding practices. A discussion followed on the availability of Ride Leaders (RL) and Tail Enders (TE) across the group spectrum. Whereas there appeared to be sufficient RL at present, it was noted that the Club was growing and we needed to engage more members as RL. There is also a need to share the proposed ride route before the ride within the group. To avoid privacy concerns with respect to publishing contact details for Club members across the board, it was suggested that RL's could collect contact details at coffee from individual members. This would enable the Group to be advised who would be leading the next ride.*

2. *There was a discussion on the need to split the Groups when the number of riders exceeded the recommended limit of 10. In that event it was important for TE's to monitor that gap with the following group to ensure that they followed the route. There was some discussion on the speed of the Groups, but it was agreed that there is a need to cycle to the speed of the lowest participant, recommending the slow rider choose a slower group in the event of an inability to keep up.*

3. *It was suggested that RL stand in front of the Group numbers 10 minutes or so prior to the start of the ride. This would enable them to assess the group size, decide on the number of groups, and nominate additional RL's and TE's, advise on the route, and outline particular points, hazards etc. The RL to remind riders to be accountable for their riding conduct and to obey the Rules and recommendations for safe riding. It was suggested that an up to date register of ride leaders for the various groups be made to enable an assessment of training and support needs. It was recognised that the RL's are the heart and soul of the Club, and that the Club needed to provide training for RL's and support. The Deputy Ride Captain suggested that a training program for route planning and preparation using Ride map with GPS could be provided. This can be raised during a pre-ride talk to gauge the level of interest. Essentially the Club needed to encourage more RL's and TE's.*

4. *There was a request to update the RL list on the website as it appears to be outdated.*

5. *There was a request to post a sample of the latest ride statistics by group to enable riders to know the pace and distance expected for each group.*

6. *There was a request to have a few minutes reserved for a safety talk with a few different and specific points discussed at each pre-ride talk..*

7. Resolved to ask the Committee to endorse the proposal to apply sanctions to habitually itinerant riders after appropriate advice and warnings have been given to the rider and that a general email be sent to all members to this effect.

8. The Ride Captain stated that there had been 6 accidents so far this year, which indicated that the Club would be on track to emulate last year's accident record of 18 accidents. There was a discussion as to what constituted an accident and whether or not incidents needed to be recorded. It was agreed that where there is a fall, irrespective of injury it should be recorded. There is currently insufficient data to assess accidents by ride groups. The Ride Captain stated that we were having too many accidents, approximately 80% of which were due to rider error. The RL and TE were responsible for instilling correct behaviours in the Groups and must call out bad behaviour. Where there were riders who consistently failed to ride according the published Guidelines, there was a need for them to change their behaviour or they may not be able to ride within the Group at the behest of the RL.

9. There was a discussion on the responsibility of riders to be responsible for the rider behind them, particularly if a gap develops. This requires cognisance of the rider behind and monitoring their progress. This raised the question of the use of mirrors and whether their use should be mandated. Neville Taylor has very recently mandated the use of mirrors in any group he leads. It was stated that the Committee had previously considered this matter, but had declined to enforce mandating the use of mirrors. There was a strong push from all in the room to have the Club impose a regulation for mandatory use of mirrors. It was agreed that this be referred to the Committee.

10. Neville's stance on the use of mirrors is a very good example of how the safety culture of the Club can be changed if RL's take the lead and should be commended.

[UN GIRO IN BICI IN ITALIA](#) or *A Bike Ride in Italy*

[A Light Read for Those Who Were Left Behind and are Green With Envy.](#)

"Are you Australian?" were the words the four Victorian group members (in future referred to as TFV) in their bedraggled state were greeted with by their interrogator, sheltering from the rain on the Bolzano hotel steps. "You must be Dianne, Gary, Debbie and Steve. I'm Vicki" and so it began. Nigel, David and Karen had been in Bolzano a day and were sampling the local vintage in town, Leslie Ann and Laurel were off to do the same and the rest of us arrived in dribs and drabs in time for the 6 pm meet and greet – except for Dot and Dave who mysteriously lost themselves on a Verona train station and made their "about time, too" entrance just in time for happy hour. We city-toured Bolzano after dinner that first night with Ingo, our Italian guide for the fortnight, the cafes, wine bars, boutiques, arcades and the market a fascinating and psychedelic introduction to our two weeks in northern Italy and the South Tyrol. Then the next morning's promised coach ride up to Reisapass and the introduction to the mechanics of our very impressive-looking bicycles, the mandatory ingesting of caffeine and we were off for what was undoubtedly one of life's better experiences.

Around lago di Resia we pedalled, with the Curon Venosta church tower seemingly afloat 100 metres offshore, lakeside to San Valentino Alla Muta and lago di Muta, all our senses reeling. The majestic mountains of the Dolomites and the Alps, the lush green meadows, the castles, monasteries, churches, the boats, the cyclists, the villages – it was enchantment overload. We stopped for a coffee in Malles Venosta with its beautiful Swiss gasthauses; we learnt early on that coffee is not necessarily coffee as we know it, especially if you want it iced. Monte Maria Abbey could be seen, stark white against the cliff, with Castel Principe nestled below.



Lunch was in Glorenza, a unique medieval trading centre with its town wall and fortified towers, nowadays a serious MTB and Enduro cycling area judging by the heavy-duty bikes and the protective gear the riders were sporting when a bunch careened into town at lunchtime. Confusion reined for a while at our lunch stop – the latecomers got served first and Vicki got three apfelstrudels but the beer and wine were a welcome change from the water guzzling we had been doing up to that point.

Pedalling along the Val Venosta cycle trail along the Adige River, stopping briefly to admire the locally mined white marble outside Laas, the home of the annual "marble and apricot" festival, we headed for our first pension in Silandro. Next morning an early start to beat the heat saw us meandering

through apple orchards heading to Merano. Our rest stop in Laces allowed us to enjoy our first cable car trip up to San Martino al Monte and some serious photo-taking, Marie exhibiting the first signs of winning the Photo Queen trophy. Frontrunners TFV discovered a hidden coffee machine with barista which we all unhesitatingly availed ourselves of before heading down.

After some smooth uneventful pedalling along a path dotted with stalls selling apple juice and dried and fresh apple, David chose this idyllic stretch of our



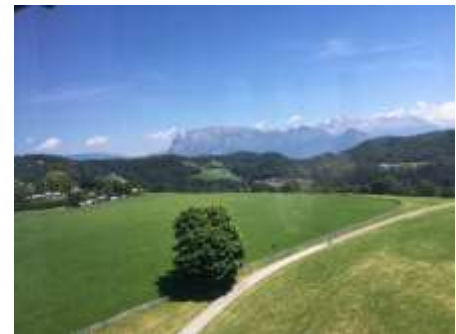
meandering to star in the annals of Bike and Barging history of the O55CC by doing a manoeuvre (according to those behind) which resembled a one-and-a half pike over his handlebars into the asphalt, resulting in serious injuries to himself, heart stopping moments for Karen, immediate emergency mode from Ingo and alarm and concern from the rest of us. It was just too dreadful to see him lying bleeding and unconscious. Kevin and Dave immediately set about being traffic wardens as the pathway was awash with cyclists and then the ambulance arrived and David was in good hands. We did have one humorous incident amidst the tragedy when a German cyclist rode up, rudely pushed everyone aside, said "Trust me, I'm a doctor" and blustered when he was firmly told to POQ. But on to Merano.



Nigel had sussed out the place a couple of days before, having trained up from Bolzano, and gave us directions into town from our Hotel – turn right and over the bridge. Wrong!! – it was turn left and don't cross the bridge. We should have known. As any lady cyclist will tell you: never trust a man when he says there's only one more hill – nor to turn right and go over the bridge. The River Passer snaked through the town and gave a bit of respite as the heat was starting to ramp up by this stage. The air conditioning in the hotel was suspect and most wanted to just laze around the pool but Ingo offered a late afternoon "ride around town" and TFV took him up on it (they are YOUNG!) but Dianne and Debbie did admit it was a bit of a slog. Karen and David appeared late afternoon after his hospital discharge with good news of no serious damage but an appointment to have his broken wrist set some time in the future and lots of bed rest for his shattered body to recover.

Morning saw us bid David and Karen farewell with promises to keep in touch and so on to Bolzano. Vineyards shared the cycle trail with apple orchards, castles shared the cliff face with the church campaniles of each village. After checking in, we took advantage of the offer of our second cable car expedition, 12 minutes up

to Soprabolzano, and a view of the majestic Dolomites, passing the stately earth pyramids as we zoomed upwards and then partook of a sumptuous lunch at the top. Our very impressive Hotel Magdalener Hof had a welcoming pool attracting TFV and Ingo, and the rest of us lazed in the garden with various beverages.



The lane to Trento again followed the River Adige, passing through vineyards and orchards. Delicious large apricots were always available, as was apple juice, at the many path-side cafes. We passed a majestic restored red porphyry castle, now a museum but no stopping as we were heading lakeside to lago di Caldaro and some respite from the heat coming off the path. And that's when it all went pear-shaped for the first time. The group got split as we came lakeside and there was a turn and a turn and another turn and we were lost. All paths led to the lake but which path?? Steve did his best to find the way for the tailenders and eventually, with the help of his translation App and a kindly Lorenzo (or Leonardo?), was able to guide us to our destination. There were no hugs and kisses when we were re-united; I don't think anyone realised we weren't there. All we wanted was shade and a cool drink. The 42° heat was blistering and we were only 40k into a 70k ride. The option to catch a train for the last part of the ride was very attractive for some and so they did.



In Trento we had to glam up – 5-star accommodation. Wow! Only trouble was it was a holiday, patron saint San Vigilio Day, so nothing much open downtown. Laurel needed a safety-pin and we scoured the local supermarket which was open but to no avail, tho' Nigel got his Nivea spray. We were left wondering ? when he was reported spraying his bodily extremities. The whole of Trento was in party mode. Fancy dress abounded – clowns, jokers, pirates, princesses, all

heading to the town square and adjoining park for the festivities.



Exploring Trento centre after dinner with Ingo and learning of its Roman conquest in the last 1st century BC and again by Napoleon in 1801 - what a magical town with its historic palazzi, cathedral, Neptune fountain and stunning buildings around the Piazza Duomo, festooned with lights, its beautiful facades and frescoes. And back at the "shack" the top floor al fresco area (too hot to even venture out during the afternoon) was turned into an outdoor viewing venue for the night's fireworks. Brilliant – although they who will not be named rather embarrassed us with their bugle-like snoring. After all, it was 11.30 pm and we had had a BIG day.°

It was about this time Kevin's knee flared up. "Gout" was the consensus due to his evident penchant for high living. This meant no riding so he and Marie caught the train towards Riva, met two lovely Australians on board and the diagnosis somehow got changed to bursitis which still meant lots of pain and, thankfully, an e-bike. It is an undisputed fact that every one of us who had an e-bike absolutely loved it.

Another morning's cycling and then we were crossing over the Pass San Giovanni which again entailed much photo taking before we came to a breathtaking halt at our first view of Lake Garda, Italy's largest lake, surrounded by majestic mountains, ancient towns and small islands. Spiralling downhill on the brakes, cars weaving in and out, we eventually escaped the mayhem, onto the bike path at Riva del Garda and a leisurely ride through the windsurfing and yachting devotees on the left and olive, lemon and palm trees on the right to the Lake Garda ferry terminal.



The 5-hour ferry trip is a good time to look at who we all are. There's Ingo, of course, our tour leader supremo, young (around the same age as TFV) with a lovely wife and two great kids, and his bike his best mate. He is absolutely passionate about cycling, loves his job, sharing his cycling prowess and love of his country with fellow cyclists. There is Gary, part of TFV, married to Dianne, tall, calm, reliable in any situation and a bit of a card shark. Steve, the other TFV male and married to Debbie, topped the scale for pain endurance with his dicky golfer's knees and his no-nonsense approach to life. Then we have the green beacon Nigel, our beer taster Dave, and a footballer "knees" contender Doug, then the China bank-King Stephen, Robert the Cool, Kevin our happy chappie and, lastly, side-runner John. The ladies who must rate a mention are Mary and Ingrid, newbies to bunch cycling, who performed admirably throughout. TFV girls did, too - Dianne always ready to lend a hand and Debbie intent on honing her riding skills as the kilometre pegs were ticking over - but they are YOUNG! Also Photo Queen Marie and our awesome Destiny Dot who rode to every destination under her own pedal power. And, of course, the three bachelor girls.



We disembarked, rode to our lodgings at Peschiera del Garda and had an entertaining introduction to our evening meal lakeside. Evidently management had forgotten we were coming and the antics, hand waving, near hysteria and exasperated arm-raising performance by the excitable Italian waiters warranted an Oscar. But the food, as usual, was superb and we stayed till they turned out the lights.

Mantova was our next destination, setting off in mind-numbing heat but with the promise of cool shaded lanes and riverside paths. We stopped at the very beautiful villages of Borghetto/Valeggio sul Mincio for iced coffee (still trying !!) and smoothies and Vicki bought her third pair of riding glasses. Why?? Someone tried to buy a postage stamp but they don't sell stamps on Fridays. The rear toilet, accessed through beautifully manicured gardens, was definitely a knee-bending experience. The cascading Mincio River scene just begged for photographs. Nigel took a photo of two old ruins - Vicki and the c.1400 Visconteo Bridge. Then, welcome to Mantua/Mantova and the Vita Pugna. We went aboard, settled in and met the Crew: Samuele, Sylvia and Esther - the best crew one could wish for. They were just like family and made us a welcome part of it right from the start.

After a cruisy cycle around the back blocks, some hasty shopping by TFV, V and L-A for new nicks, cool jerseys, shirts and T-shirts to combat the incessant heat and humidity, we met Christina our local guide for our introduction to Mantova and its fascinating history and the Gonzaga family, then time for our own pursuits. An afternoon cruise on the Lago Superiore to admire the lily pads and the pure white cygnets was a welcome change from a saddle and a break from the 40+°. But then, mistakenly, a spot of bird watching with Ingo seemed attractive to a silly few so off we went like lambs to the slaughter - one and a half hours of bum-numbing cycling along pitted and potted limestone tracks and not a bird to be seen. Dinner onboard - what treats were in store for us: each night a gourmet spread, as introduced by Sylvia and Esther, local haute cuisine at its finest. Prosecco, wines, beer - even the water was 5-star.

Day 10 saw us cruising for the first time, heading for the Po delta along the Mincio. At Governolo Lock some thoughtless boatie had stolen our berth, so we gathered portside and watched Sam, Sylvia and Esther perform their nautical skills to get us alongside and all bikes and riders off to begin the 50k ride to Zelo. We passed the morning passing locks and lay-bys; some shade, some coffee; many cyclists.



Lunch and drinks were duly consumed under umbrellas at a local cafe in Bergantino town square and what a delight we had in store. The Bergantino Museum of Carousel had us all enthralled, with the history and innovations of the 18th century amusement parks, the masks, the puppets, being able to play the ancio piano a cilindro, the miniature carousels and Ferris wheels, a kaleidoscope of treasures in this small town. And then, if our senses weren't sated enough, it was time to indulge our taste buds so off to a nearby farm to learn the expertise needed to produce the famed Grana Padano premium quality cheese (some of us recoiled at the "zero grazing" of the milking cows) and to sample the cheese along with a nip of local red wine. Yum! But the temperature was soaring and we

needed to create our own breeze – roll on Zelo and canal-side. After dinner we strolled down the road to the local “Old Pub” and had a beer or two and then back to sharpen our wits at the nightly card game, a TFV introduction which led to much frustration and hilarity.

Ferrara was our next city destination. Sunflowers were showing off along the trail, a photo-shoot mecca. Into Ferrara, one rider missing. Steve had the wind in his spokes and sailed forth and missed us at the turn but after copious phone calls, and a welcome recuperation on shady park benches, we saw him roll over the nearby bridge and were off to board our coach destined for Adria. By now, memories tend to blur but next morning the Vita Pugna motored to our next berth at Porto Viro, we disembarked in anticipation of the ride through the wetlands of the Po Delta and knowledge that we might (fingers crossed) see flamingos, and it lived up to all our expectations – sadly no flamingos but the birds, their habitat, the wildflowers, the vast area, tiny churches springing up around corners. Brilliant – plus we had no time constraints and the ride was leisurely to say the least.

Chioggia welcomed us, cycling past colourful low-lying houses, to the boat. The path to the town centre was past the hive of fishing boats offloading their catch. We learnt about the history, admired the world’s oldest clock, photographed the bridges and the boats along the canals, peeked into the fish market and explored the main town thoroughfare, then topped it all off with gelato and/or alcohol interspersed with shopping for bargains. It was really all too much to take in in the space of 24 hours. A swim in the Adriatic was a welcome rejuvenation for a few, a sit-down another.



Pellestrina Island was our overnight stop with the next day’s ride through its small towns with their aroma of grilled fish, the path taking us along the Murazzi stone walls built in the 1700s to protect the lagoon from the sea, and further on past the island’s famed lacemakers chatting out front of their houses along the waterfront.

Then a rush to get our 72-hour tickets for the ferry ride to Lido and the forthcoming vaporetto rides in Venice.

Lido was more than expected – vibrant, crowded, tree and flower-lined streets, and a myriad of beaches, umbrellas, beach huts, sunbeds, sun-worshippers, hotels, resorts and cars. The picturesque Venezia lagoon was our first eye-opener – clear blue water, speedboats, launches, cruisers, yachts and, of course, ferries. We stopped to admire the Palazzo del Cinema and the Mostra Internazionale d’Arte Cinematografica, trying to imagine what it would be like at Film Festival time, dismounting out front of the old Casino, stark white amidst the multicoloured hues of beach wear on bodies in various states of dress or undress. Our afternoon of R & R passed too quickly and so back on board for our leisurely and final cruise to our mooring at Giudecca, a small island immediately south of the central island of Venice. After another delectable meal, Ingo took us into St Mark’s Square for an evening stroll minus the crowds, pointing out beautiful historical landmarks, taking us down narrow streets, along canals and over bridges; our senses were reeling.

A no-nonsense city guide steered us around the famous sights and sites the next morning – Laurel bought a hat – bringing ancient stories to life for us. Patrizia was maybe her name – or Batista; anyway, she was bossy but knew her stuff. We were then left in Ingo’s clutches (we needed to be clutched for fear of getting lost) and he introduced us to parts of the city that she had not covered and then we were left to our own devices with directions how best to get back to the vaporetto, which we all successfully did, feeling quite proud of ourselves.



Murano was the next highlight, glass and glass and more Venetian glass. The small island was very photogenic along the canals with all the pretty glass wares on display at the myriad of shops. Quite the tourist trap if you weren’t on your toes.

And then it’s goodbye. We had a beautiful evening meal. Kevin made a touching speech in Italian thanking Sam and Sylvia and Esther and then he had to translate it for us yobs. Vicki thanked Ingo and bawled as she usually does at emotional moments. There was much hugging, kissing and hand shaking. We – the whole 18 of us – had been given the best holiday we could possibly have imagined. Heat and sore bums aside, it was TOPS.

