

# Newsletter



## Duty roster

### 5 March, Casey Fields

Steve Barnard (R), Allan Chiong, Quentin Frayne

### 12 March, Dunlop Road

Nigel Kimber (R), Peter Webb (TC), Andrew Neilsen (TC), Ray Russo (TC), Ken Bone, Gary Wishart, Sam Bruzzese, Chris Hughson, Tony Chandler, Tim Crowe, Peter Webster, Steph Coulsen, Ross Gardiner, Darren Woolhouse, Daniel Couzens, Anthony Gullace

*If rostered for duty, you must be there at least 1 hour before start time. It's your responsibility to find a replacement if unable to do your duty, then advise Andrew Buchanan, [tiptop2@optusnet.com.au](mailto:tiptop2@optusnet.com.au)*

Editor: Nick Tapp  
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Our cup runneth over this week, with reports for most grades from last Saturday's scratch races at Lake Learmonth and one from Sunday's VVCC Open. As well, Geoff O'Loghlen reports on the seven-day, 680-kilometre Wellington to Auckland race that he recently took part in along with David McCormack and John Williams. Pull up an armchair and put on your reading glasses ...

Racing this week returns to Casey Fields. All that wind at Ballarat should have been good training. Best of luck to all.

And a quick shout out to Eastern member Tom Leaper, winner on general classification, Masters A grade, of the Tour of East Gippsland at Metung last weekend. Congratulations, Tom!



Thelma and Louise, aka Kym Petersen (right) and Paula McGovern. Read about their weekend road trip to Ballarat over the page.  
Photo: Paula McGovern



## Graded scratch races and VVCC Open, Lake Learmonth, 27–28 February

Grade	1st	2nd	3rd
A grade (7)	Phil Smith	Rob Amos	Richard Taylor (Eureka)
B grade (7)	Nick Tapp	Bruce Will	Peter Webb
C grade (9)	Greg Harvey	Franc Tomsic	Colin Hooper (Geelong)
D grade (7)	Colin Mortley	Juanita Cadd	Dean Niclasen
E grade (4)	J. C. Wilson	Ray Watts	Paula McGovern
F grade (2)	Petra Niclasen	Rhonda Kennedy	

### C grade, E grade and VVCC Open

#### *Thelma and Louise's weekend away*

Well, the girls managed to get a family leave pass for the weekend to race both Saturday and Sunday. Whooo hoo! Road trip! 'Thelma' and 'Louise' (aka Kym, the experienced one, and Paula, the rookie) headed to Ballarat nice and early and arrived at Lake Learmonth. Except there was no lake – just grass and bushes. So, it was called a lake but there was no lake?! OK, let's go with this.

Thelma lines up in C grade and Louise in E grade with her regular guys, Zen, Ray and JC. The Windmill circuit had been planned out for the day. Maybe there will be no wind? There's no lake and all. Nup. There was wind! E grade shared the load, with Louise trying to preserve her legs for Sunday and sitting in behind Ray and Zen, and JC just lurking at the back. Finally E grade make the final turn for the lo-o-o-ong home straight. Windy, and the road went on forever. Zen pulling a big turn at the front and Louise still tucked up behind Ray.

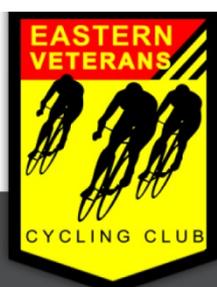


*The lake with no water.*

*Photos: Paula McGovern*

JC makes the jump and storms to the line to claim the win with Ray, Louise and Zen close behind. It was a nice win for JC, whose father unfortunately passed away during the week. I think this one was for dad. Condolences to JC and his family.

Thelma had to race another lap, all the while E and F grades were finished and enjoying a chat.





Thel finishes in the group and we all head back to the clubrooms to enjoy some country hospitality and refreshments.

With no family commitments and no one wanting dinner cooked or to be taken somewhere, the girls kicked back at their hotel, dangled their feet in the pool and rehydrated.

Louise, the rookie, really had no idea what an Open Handicap was. There was lots of advice given and something about a 'mark' – whatever that meant. The girls hit the town and enjoyed a great night out with Rhonda and Bruce but were tucked up in bed by 10.30 pm.

Sunday dawns, it's race day (again!), and all is to be revealed. Thelma and Louise rock up to the registration desk and are handed 'The Sheet'. Lots of names and times on this very important piece of paper. It was like the accountants getting the latest tax rules supplement!

Louise got a mark of 37 minutes and Thelma was at 14:30. Apparently Thelma must have been a naughty girl in a previous life and the handicapper was not so kind to her! She knew what was ahead of her: a long, lonely ride.

As it turned out, Louise's ride was a bit lonely, too. Her group of five starters went down to three in the first 5 km, then two after 20 km. Louise and the lovely Di rolled turns until 37 km, then Louise was on her own (if you don't count the sheep). At this stage Eastern riders were the bookends of the field! (*In other words, Paula was the race leader – Ed.*)

Spin, spin, spin, drops, hoods, drops, hoods! The Mt Misery circuit – who would have thought? Wind and hills! Time for a gel, but this time with *caffeine*. The rookie discovered just how runny a gel can get after sitting in one's pocket for one and a half hours of racing. Hoping for a kick, Louise shared the gel with her knicks, top tube, hoods and fingers. Who knew the places gel could reach?

Eventually, at the 50 km mark, Louise was caught by three riders off 24 minutes. An attempt to stay

on did not last long with the last hill of the day in sight. Two more bunches pass Louise. There seem to be a lot of Geelong jerseys; do they hunt in packs? Louise gets home in 29th place, 1 minute 44 seconds behind the winner. Thelma raced it out and was last seen entering therapy.

A huge thanks to the Eureka Vets for hosting the weekend. The hospitality and warm showers post race were much appreciated. A tough lot of racing but a fun and friendly atmosphere.

PS Thelma bought a new bike on the way home from Ballarat (see the photo) in the hope that the handicapper may be a bit kinder to her next time.

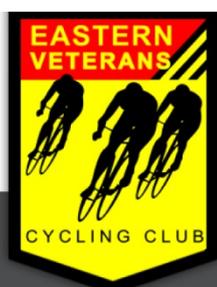
*Paula McGovern*



*Thelma's new race bike. Red ones go faster.*

### **A grade**

With seven starters and an increasing wind it wasn't going to be an easy ease back into racing, there'd be little opportunity to hide and lots of opportunity to suffer. The seven were made up of three Eureka riders and four Eastern: Phil Smith (another nail in the 'easy' coffin), Rob Amos, Chris Ellenby and myself. On the line the Eureka riders were huddled, heads together, leaving us to ourselves and giving Phil and Rob the opportunity to talk tactics – this wasn't an inter-club, it wasn't a teams race, but with near-matched numbers it was never going to be anything other than 'us versus them'.





I'd anticipated early attacks courtesy of Phil Smith, but it was a chase from the get-go as the locals bolted for the first turn on the gun. For those not there: from the start it's a couple of hundred metres to the first turn, then 4.7 km along Learmonth–Sulky Road with a cross–headwind coming from the starboard bow, left onto Coghills Creek Road for 5.8 km with the wind from behind, before another left onto Addington–Creswick Road, a short 2 km to the next turn onto Donovans Road and the 5 km headwind run to the finish – one lap, 17.5 km. A grade, four laps, 70 kilometres.

The locals had their heads down, and the fear of lack of local knowledge had the four of us scrambling for their wheels. A couple of hundred metres into what I will call the first leg, it was all together but no chance to rest. Chris and I doing our best to stay out of sight and out of mind as the other five rolled turns, keeping a solid pace. One couldn't hide for too long though, and eventually everybody was doing turns of a sort, the bunch echeloned left from the middle of the road to the edge of the bitumen – a point to be remembered as the race neared the pointy end: somewhere to ride the opposition into the dirt.

I will call the second leg of the first lap the leg that time forgot. I know there were seven together at the start of it and there were four left at the end, but how that came to be is lost in the mists of red. Polling the others hasn't cleared the fog or shed a lot of light on the logistics of the 5.8 km but has provided some insights, so here goes.

The anticipated aggression from Phil came early on the second leg with a relatively rested Chris Ellenby and one of the Eureka riders reacting quickly enough to make it a breakaway. Three away: two Eastern, one Eureka – that's to our favour, happy to let the leash out a bit and leave any chase to the two Eureka riders who'd been left behind. And chase they did, both Rob and I waiting for the move and enjoying the draft as one of theirs closed it all down. Rob counterattacked the reunion, only to be shut down in short order, then it was Phil attacking, just after coming off the front, and Richard Taylor of Eureka responding to get a gap. One on one, *mano a mano* – not the

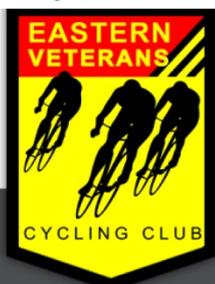
way it should be and, with Rob still bringing his heart rate down, it was my turn. Surprising myself, I bridged and it was us against him. And it wasn't just us that Richard was battling – he was plagued by a bee or something that had managed to slip under his jersey and he was frantically smacking himself around as he tried to rid himself of his unwanted guest and still maintain enough pedal pressure to keep with Phil, who was setting a solid pace.

Not long after, it was more of us against him – not more bees but Rob as he pushed his heart rate back into the red and joined the lead group. And then it was just two of us against one as Phil took a momentary leave of absence, dropping back to try to tempt Chris to join the fray. But Chris was entrenched in a battle of his own with the two remaining Eureka riders, so Phil casually sauntered back to the break and it was four that rounded the third corner to start the short third leg.

The next two legs to round out the lap were uneventful, Rob and Phil pushing hard to establish the break, Richard and I doing what we thought we could or should to assist.

The echelon reformed down Learmonth–Sulky Road as we pushed into the cross–headwind for the second time. Late in the leg, where there was a slight rise, Phil has hit us and we were content to let him go, the ideal opportunity to soften Richard. Richard made a few strong efforts to get away and across but they were well covered and consequently short-lived. Rob made a few, not so intense, moves, more to keep Phil from feeling lonely than to get across. Down the second leg for the second time, with the wind at our backs, it was obvious Phil was waiting for some company and Rob finally obliged with a concerted effort that broke Richard's grip and ended the race; two away, two pursuing, two or three chasing.

Richard made several serious efforts to get across to the lead pair but I wasn't a) going to help, or b) capable of helping, as both Phil and Rob put in the hard yards to establish their lead. A lead that they developed to the extent that when Phil was attacked by a bee late on the last





lap he was able to stop, remove his helmet to get rid of the culprit while Rob waited for him, and they were still not seen before the finish. Phil repaying Rob's kindness by attacking on the slow drag up the final leg, garnering sufficient gap to hold Rob at bay on the 1.5 km downslope run to the finish.

Back in the pursuit, guilt finally caught up with me after crossing the line for the second time and I started to contribute. These contributions lasted a lap and a bit before failing. My lack of condition was dragging at me: bum aching, left Achilles screaming pain at me, and the left foot feeling like it was in a bucket of Deep Heat. Halfway through the last lap I was done, and all that was left to me was to hope to stay away from the chasers (and from B grade) as Richard rode on to claim a very lonely 3rd place – mind you, my 4th was just as lonely.

Chris enjoyed a battle with the remaining Eureka rider to claim the sprint that ended their race.

*Nigel Kimber*

## **B grade**

Well, my day started badly when I tweaked my back while loading the bike into the back of the car. With heaps of Deep Heat and a hot water bottle on my back I headed to Learmonth, hoping that it would be okay by the time I got there. When I arrived it wasn't much better, but it was warm and so was the weather. I registered and got on the bike very gingerly. Getting the leg over was the tricky bit, but isn't that often the way? On the warm-up I was feeling okay and made the decision to race. Our group was very small with only seven riders – none from the Eureka club and just one from Northern.

We departed on our first of four laps with some of us doing turns at the front. The wind was building. On two parts of the course it was a crosswind, the back straight was downwind with the finishing straight a block headwind.

Northern's Michael Hartman made the first move but it was just a tester, so it was shut down fairly

quickly. We continued around the circuit doing turns as required. This pattern continued except for the loss of Peter Mackie and a sick Russell Wheelhouse, so now it was down to five. Michael continued to attack and on one such occasion we left him out there on an upwind leg and this took the sting out of his legs.

The bell was finally rung and it was Nick Tapp doing a long turn. I had a bit of a go at the front and Bruce Will did a fast turn on the downwind leg, then Paul Firth did one of the longest and most powerful 9 km lead-outs I have ever had the pleasure to be sitting on.

When it came to the sprint it was going to be a matter of leaving it as late as one could risk because of the now very strong headwind. Paul was still on the front, with Bruce behind him, then Nick, Michael and myself bringing up the rear. Nick was first to go, which caught both Bruce and myself a bit by surprise because we still had a way to go. Nick flew past a faltering Paul and Michael was left floundering. Nick judged it very well and crossed the line first with Bruce and myself closing fast and that's the way we finished the race.

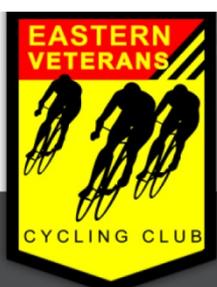
The course was really very good with good quality roads and very patient and courteous drivers. A special mention to the corner marshals, who did a great job and used the correct flags to keep us safe; all in all, a great day's racing. The race distance was 70 kilometres and we averaged a respectable 34 km/h.

PS a special mention to Franc Tomsic for putting my bike back in the car so I didn't hurt my back again.

*Peter Webb*

The sun was shining on Lake Learmonth and there was no sign of rain. It was windy, but you know what they say: two out of three ain't bad – and two out of three was two better than last year!

Six out of seven B-graders on the start line in Donovans Road were from Eastern, and the seventh was not a Eureka rider, as you might





expect, but Michael Hartman from Northern. Michael soon indicated he would not be taking a back seat, going to the front up Learmonth–Sulky Road and lifting the pace. Sharing the work, though, were Peter Webb, Paul Firth, Bruce Will and me. Peter Mackie and a poorly Russell Wheelhouse were either keeping their powder dry or struggling already.

Around a sharp left-hander into Coghills Creek Road, the wind was suddenly our friend, and speeds hit 55 km/h plus as we steamed through the township that is actually called Blowhard – true! This is the longest leg of the 17.6 km lap. The westerly leg on Addington–Creswick Road is short, mostly downhill, and had a crosswind from the left.

Heading south down Donovans Road on the last leg, you climb gently for 3 km to a little crest, then it's mostly flat or slightly downhill for another 2 km to the finish line. On this leg the wind was friend to nobody, least of all the brave soul on the front. We had three more laps ahead of us and were still testing the lie of the land, and the stronger riders shared the work into the wind. With the finish in mind, I made a mental note of distances: from the 'Cycling race in progress' signs it was 1.2 km to the line; from the last pair of white posts it was about 200 metres. Focusing on the finish at least lessened the temptation to escape the evil wind and go home.

On lap 2, Michael attacked up the pinch before the sharp left-hander. I thought one of us should go with him and, being on the front at the time, I rode across onto his wheel before the gap got too wide. With the wind behind us, Michael made it clear he was keen to try for a break and invited me to work with him. We swapped a couple of turns, but before long we had company again. This move may have dislodged Peter Mackie and Russell, though, since I soon noticed they were no longer with us. Paul now put in a long, fast turn that laid to rest any thought of attacking.

We were a bunch of five now, four Eastern riders plus Michael. I had visions of last year's season opener in Belgium, when Sky's Ian Stannard got into a break with three Etixx riders and beat them

all. I wished we'd talked some tactics before the race. Should we protect Bruce, our big sprinter? Send someone up the road – in this wind? On Donovans Road for the third time, Michael attacked. Webby was quickly on his wheel and the rest of us gradually worked our way back into contact. Webby then signalled for someone else to attack. I took off up the right side, Bruce came too, and we made Michael work to get back on. Webby now had another go, and I eased off the pace behind him to let the gap widen. Michael saw the danger and towed the rest of us across, and we took the bell all five together. We might not have talked tactics, but everyone seemed to have the same idea.

It was the final lap but Michael was not done yet. Again he attacked out of the corner onto the downwind leg, but the others seemed underwhelmed and calmly set about reeling him in. All together again. On the short leg someone swung off and Paul took over the pace. As we turned onto Donovans Road, into the wind, Paul was on the front. Up to the crest, and he was still there. Past the race in progress signs – still there. With about 500 metres to go, Paul got out of the saddle for a moment, then sat down again. He was done, but his mammoth turn had become a great lead-out. Bruce was on his wheel and a bit off to the right. I was in a similar spot behind Bruce. Michael was tucked in on the left. At the last white posts I thought I had better open the sprint before the sprinters did. Bruce reacted as I went past, but I had got the jump on him and held on. Webby took 3rd to make it an Eastern clean sweep. Michael was left in 4th place and a valiant Paul in 5th.

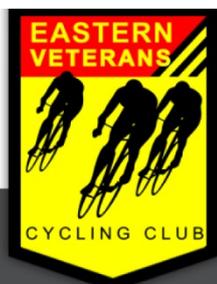
Thanks to all those involved in running the day, especially our hosts from Eureka.

*Nick Tapp*

## **D grade**

### *Mount(ing) Disappointment*

Not to dwell too long on the fact that a meagre 30 Eastern riders fronted to compete in the Eureka hosted afternoon, only C grade fielding sufficient





numbers to qualify for aggregate points. Perhaps the memory of last year's cold, wet and windy conditions was sufficient to keep many at home. For those who couldn't get enough, conditions were fine and the racing competitive.

### *The Savvy Seven*

The seven D-grade starters were well familiar with each others' strengths and weaknesses, having raced together many times. The 'Schleck' duo, alias Juanita and Graham Cadd, were back and looking to inflict venomous pain on any who dared to follow their wheels. Colin Mortley, a strong and consistent performer at any venue and prepared to bury himself for a place. Nick Hainal, lurking in the background waiting to nick off at the drop of a hat. Peter (seagull) Gray in his first D-grade road race for some time. A rapidly improving Dean (Lego) Niclasen – wait a minute, he should be riding in C grade! Finally, Harry (if one sprint ain't enough) Hibgame shouldn't be underestimated in a sprint finish.

### *Speed, distance or both*

Low terrain flying is what it felt like, as the seven sped along the 6 km Coghills Creek Road with the assistance of a moderately strong tailwind. Being fairly certain that he wouldn't go the bunch distance, Peter dutifully rode to the front to relieve Colin, who, when asked if he wanted a rest, advised all, 'I am resting'.

'Well, would you like to go back to the front, Colin?'

'Ah, nope', was his reply.

### *The break-up*

Nick instigated an attack of sorts on the second lap of the Learmonth–Sulky Road climb. Peter was distanced at a bad time and had conceded several hundred metres as he turned onto the wind-assisted leg. Another attack by Nick a few kilometres up the road found Peter just 10 tantalising metres short of bridging the gap. It was basically 'over, red rover' for him. The same attack put Graham and Harry in difficulty and a four-rider breakaway was formed for the remaining lap and a half.

### *The finale*

Harry disappeared so the only 'carrot' in sight for me was Graham. Despite having had several weeks off the bike, he still managed an impressive performance. (Thanks for the sprint challenge and post-race 'shout'.) Short of witnessing the finish, I believe Colin, Juanita and Dean distanced Nick after he headed the bunch up the final Donovans Road windward climb, and finished in that order.

Thanks: Eureka club members and marshals on the day. Lake Learmonth for just being there (or not) – wet or dry, it's certainly a testing course. EVCC members who competed.

### *Peter Gray*



*As always, the post-race spread at Eureka's clubrooms was a drawcard.*

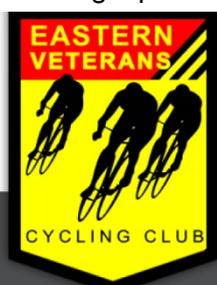
*Photos: Peter Mackie*



*C-grade winner Greg Harvey with Ron Stranks (Neil Cartledge behind).*



*Fränk and Andy? Graham and Juanita Cadd chill after the race.*





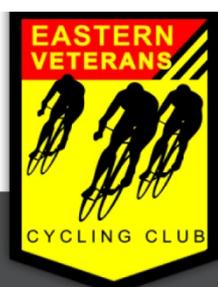
## Tuesday night racing at METEC, 1 March

Grade	1st	2nd	3rd
A grade (11)	Richard Abel	Chris Hughson	Peter Howard
B grade (11)	Perry Peters	Dayle Goodall	David Pyne
C grade (11)	Tony Curulli	Greg Harvey	Hayden Chapman
D grade (7)	Ken Allan	Colin Mortley	Harry Hibgame
E grade (5)	Zenon Gawronski	Mark Granland	Phil Johns

## Wednesday criterium at the Loop, Kew, 2 March

Division	1st	2nd	3rd
Division 1 (14)	Ian Clark (N)	Ray Russo	Paul Firth
Division 2 (11)	John Hasouras (N)	Russell Wheelhouse	Rob Giles
Division 3 (6)	Doug Page	D. Drew (N)	Dean Niclasen
Division 4 (5)	John Eddy	Laurie Bohn	Richard Maggs

Thanks to Keith Bowen, Laurie Bohn, Barry Rodgers and Steve Barnard for setting up and running proceedings.



## News etc.

### Laud da chain rings

*It began with the forging of the great rings ...*

*The 53 for the A-graders, strongest of all the riders, the 39 for the B-graders, canny followers of the A-graders, conserving their strength for the final showdown, and then there was the 34 for the rest, doomed to scrabbling behind squabbling over scraps ...*

Sorry, got carried away with an idea I had, while in New Zealand, for an epic story of trial and tribulation. In fact I've been to the Wellington to Auckland bike race and I can report it's a remarkable logistical, organisational and competitive event. Seven days, 12 stages, 680 kilometres and 6700 metres of climbing. Nearly 80 individual competitors, 13 corporate teams involving around 110 people and team support vehicles, some 20 motor homes with supporters, one TV crew, six motorbike escorts, one medic van, one sag wagon, one luggage truck, starting and finishing facilities, timing systems, photographers, two masseuses, one cancelled day due to cyclonic gales and one tandem. The only things missing were a daily tour newspaper and a village.

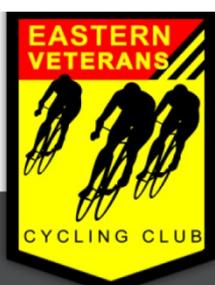
I also *raced* the Wellington to Auckland bike race and I can report no sprint points, no king of the mountain points, no podiums, no random spot prizes, two chopped front wheels, one crash, one worn-out tyre, two visits to the mechanic, two undigestible buffet dinners, no massages, three BBQs and one of the best, most invigorating bike races and weeks ever.

This was my first multi-day, multi-stage – and, according to some of my 'friends', my first multi-hour – race and as such was entered more on the basis of a nice way to see some of New Zealand rather than a red-hot go for overall glory. And to reflect this my preparation involved, firstly, trying to ride for more than the standard Casey Fields criterium time and, secondly, to just sit in and not do anything 'really' dumb. Oh, and aiming for 500 kilometres a week in the six weeks before the event.



*The pre-race briefing. Ian, eat your heart out.*

*Photos: Geoff O'Loghlen collection*

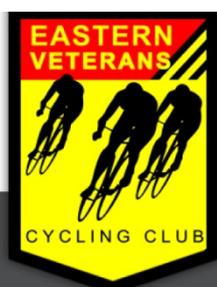


All this was made to seem hopelessly hopeful when a swarm of lean, wiry, skinny, leathered, gimlet-eyed men and women, all with hard as diamonds calves, assembled on the first Saturday. There was John, the laconic Stuey O'Grady lookalike who was training for the Tour of Mansfield, which involved racing in northern New South Wales and up and down Thredbo. There was Stefan, the cheery German (who not only looked like Jens Voigt but lives just around the corner from him), who had been hit by a truck the previous week, cracking his collarbone, and who said he hadn't come all this way not to ride his bike but a band-aid could be helpful. There was John, the lean and rangy New Zealander, who in the past year had won the 60–69 age group national road race, time trial and any other race he felt like entering. He was also the same John who had won his age group in this race the previous year and could talk in detail about any of the stages to be used and how to race them depending upon the conditions. There was Phil, the smiling, shiny Queenslander, on his spotless, shiny McLaren Venge, who had less kilograms than years to his name, who was training for the world championships in Perth later this year and had stage profiles taped to his bars that detailed target wattages, gradients and key sections. And he was in my age group. There was also the small, intense bundle of contained energy who looked, and subsequently raced, like Thomas Voeckler, and who is now known by the nom de guerre of 'Wandering Dave'.



*Eastern jerseys through the years – modelled at the W2A by (L–R) David McCormack, John Williams and Geoff O'Loughlen – plus a couple of photo bombers.*

The race itself began on a bright Sunday morning. A 35-kilometre stage that would culminate in a seven-kilometre hill climb that was allegedly one of the hardest climbs of the race. Suffice to say that the neutral section was very pleasant, the section to the foot of the climb was nervous and globular as everyone tried to stay one back and one out from those who knew the way at the front, and that it exploded as soon as the gradient reached five per cent. I can't vouch for what happened at the actual front as a group of some 20 or so riders – or, as I preferred to call them, 'bloody neo-pros' – disappeared over the first ridge and frankly weren't an issue again until lunch, when they had already claimed the best places under the trees, while Phil, the shiny Queenslander, had his bike cleaned, relubed and wheels suitable for the afternoon stage fitted by his charming soigneur. I meanwhile toiled up the hill under a red hot burning sun with only one bidon of what is apparently known in New Zealand as 'hot water'. Just as all hope was about to expire, I actually passed a couple of people and was so surprised I couldn't back off until out of their sight. At that point I discovered that a couple of absolute wheel suckers, including John the lean and rangy New Zealander and Wandering Dave, were contentedly trailing behind me, happy to sit, not so much on my wheel as in my shadow. Just as the finish line hove into view, John and Dave decided to show me how it should be done and they flew by, thanking me with the apparently traditional local call of appreciation, 'sukka'.





*The neutral stage out of town.*

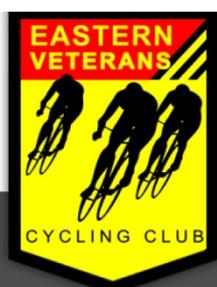
At the end of the stage I was five minutes down on shiny Phil, who was two seconds in front of a couple, and then the rest of the bloody neo-pros. I was surprised to learn I had actually finished in the top 20 on GC, but over half of those in front of me were in my age group. While I had been prepared to be walloped on GC, my secret hopes of being extra competitive (oh all right then, of winning!) in my age group were dashed in just over an hour.

During the next 11 stages huge efforts would be made to bridge, gap, hold, stretch, shield, sneak away, attack, sit on and help riders. Groups and riders would be cajoled, threatened, encouraged or congratulated in order to form or maintain working groups. Rolling turns and pace lines formed and reformed as wind shifts were adjusted to and the road changed direction, and then, just when you felt hopeful or broken, the tandem could come into play. Break away over the top of the hill and the tandem could track you down in a flash on the downhill. Get dropped going up a hill but latch onto the back of the tandem and get pulled back to the bunch on the flat or downhill.

Over the week the racing, the tactics, the strategies, the recovery, the planning, the eating, the stretching and the pain, the tiredness and exhaustion were intense and unlike any other race, ride or event I'd been in. I was in a bubble and the only thing that mattered, counted, was remembered or anticipated was the race, the racers and the bike. Well, okay, being on time for the luggage truck in the morning, packing the day pack, washing and drying gear, finding the way to the start line, signing in, comparing savlon and sudocrem, negotiating acceptable music with your roomie (who would you pick: Bowie or Reed, Aretha or Adele?), finding the hotel at the end of the stage and then, if you were lucky, checking the internet, finding food, studying the race notes for the next day, cleaning, adjusting and relubing your bike – also required a bit of effort and attention.

Oh, and trying to eat enough food became precious.

Depending on the strategy for each stage – you could be trying to make time on others, or conserving energy for the next stage, which may not have been to your liking, or even just following your nearest





challengers – every moment was packed with potential excitement. For example, Wandering Dave and I once bridged to the leading breakaway group, reeled it in and, just as we rolled onto the tail, Wandering Dave suddenly lurched to the right, hit my front wheel at 45 or 50 km/h, and my bike and I sashayed down the road like an eel on caffeine pills. After retreating into the rest of the bunch to stop screaming with fear and regain some composure, I rode back up to Wandering Dave and had a few, I thought well chosen, words that frankly didn't seem to bother WD too much as he kept following wheels with little apparent regard for others around him. Didn't take me long to figure out not to go near his wheel again.

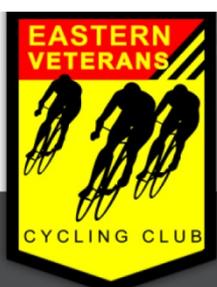
Later that day, lining up for the start of the second stage, which was due to start in three minutes, I casually rubbed my gloved hand over the back wheel to ensure it wasn't flat and that no stones were embedded in the tyre; something didn't feel quite right. Looking back and down, I saw the rubber casing was missing across the full width of the tyre for about an inch or so. (It was subsequently decided that the sashay had initially scraped the rubber away at the contact point and that the road, which had the coarseness of the biggest bloody cheese-grater ever built, had then flayed the rubber further.) I looked around, wondering what the hell would happen now and if I would be in the sag wagon for the afternoon or, if there was a bike shop in this teensy town, how far I would have to ride by myself later that day. Then Wandering Dave's voice chimed in: 'You can have my wheel, I've got a spare.' I then discovered the joy of having the 'service vehicle' just over there being driven by shiny Phils' soigneur with an absolutely beautiful Reynolds lightweight racing wheel just waiting for me. Two minutes later I'm back on the start line (it took a while to get the grease off my hands!) ready to roll, thanking Wandering Dave for his help and ruling a line under the morning's incident, and he responds, 'If I get a flat, you have to give me back my wheel'. And we were away.

And really, that's the story of the race as a contest. Phil and Co. would lead the way out and the rest would flail along behind as best they could. Phil eventually won the tour by those two seconds he won on stage one; while I finished, still in the top 20, but an hour behind Phil and Co. and a long way down in my age group of apparently endless bloody neo-pros (and me).

For me there were perhaps four moments in the race where I failed the 'Don't do dumb things' test. The first was when I was not able to hold the lead group on an incline after a sprint and then had to ride solo for 15 kilometres into the headwind, losing five minutes. Secondly, when I chased a rider 400 metres in front of me for nearly 20 kilometres while he chased a rider 500 metres in front of him. By the time we joined up, worked together and got onto the group in front, we were too spent to jump on the passing tandem train that steamed past us and finished three minutes in front. The third dumb action was not eating enough food to fuel a 116-kilometre stage and losing a further six minutes. The greatest dumb thing, however, was not studying the mocca of the second-last stage and as a result not knowing the final hill and finish, thereby blowing what should have been a stage win.

On the other hand, living a week of being in a tour race, with all the trappings of cheap hotels, buffet food and close living with a large bunch of funny, loud, competitive, quiet, smart, young, interesting and different people, was one of the smarter things I've done in recent times.

*Geoff O'Loughlen*





## Future events

### Eastern Vets

For other events, please refer to page 1 of this newsletter, or go to <http://easternvets.com/roster/>

Note: Graded Scratch Race entries are accepted on the day up to 15 minutes before the advertised race start time. Handicap entries close the Tuesday before the race. Riders entering a handicap MUST pay the entry fee regardless of participation. Fees are due on race day; entrants will NOT be allowed to start in any EVCC race until fees have been paid.

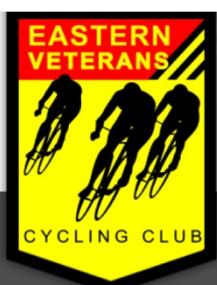
No late entries will be accepted for either scratch races or handicaps. Entries to handicaps can be submitted via e-mail to the handicapper or on any race day prior to the event.

### Northern Vets

For more details go to <http://www.northerncycling.com/>

## Training rides

Day/Time/Place	Route	Style	Contact
<b>Tuesdays</b> 9:30 am (9:00 am during DST)  Main Yarra Trail (meet under Burke Road overpass)	Under Burke Road on Main Yarra Trail to Southbank via Yarra Boulevard and bike paths along the river and return	Social, bike paths and roads, coffee @ Southbank	Keithb33@optusnet.com.au
Sunday mornings  Beach Road Ride. Leave 8.00 am sharp. Meet at Peanut Farm Reserve, cnr Blessington & Chaucer Sts, St Kilda	Ride along Beach Rd to Frankston. 10 min stop. Then ride back to St Kilda (approx. 65 km)	Social ride, coffee back at St Kilda	
Saturday mornings (7.30 am) and Sundays/public holidays (8.00 am)  Meet at Ringwood Clock towers, Maroondah Hwy, Ringwood	Maroondah Hwy to Carlton for coffee, then return	Fast social	





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