

## 2010 The Great Victoria (Desert) Bike Ride

Held this year for a select band of crazy cyclists this unique event had some similarities with the more popular and probably much easier, better known non desert (particularly now the drought has broken) annual ride held within the state of Victoria. Victorians, changeable but generally cool weather and chatter about AFL (complete with ex St Kilda player) - were we lost? But no, this was the 2010 Simpson Desert Bike Challenge which had to move location due to the changing weather patterns that has seen the Simpson flooded & roads closed.

Amongst the 24 crazies were Andrew Koop & Kathy Moylan of Alice Springs. 15/24 riders were repeat offenders suggesting that cycling in the Desert is a fun event. 10/24 riders chose to ride with really fat tyres. Think Pugsleys and Fatbacks. And 4 Queenslanders failed to show - something to do with radioactivity levels?

Photos that circulated prior to the event made me wonder about the hard slog along relatively flat roads. Even corrugations could be detected. No great fast runs down sand dunes in sight. All of these fears eventuated and there was more. Head winds.

The race was an out & back course. Starting west of Coober Pedy, out through the Dingo Fence, through the Tallaringa Conservation Park and following the Anne Beadell Highway to the Great Victoria Desert, past Emu and turning near Annes Corner. The area had interest for people with knowledge of the history of atomic testing in Australia and others who just love the space of the desert.

And so to the race. Over recent years the Challenge has been against the Desert rather than other riders. Completing 100% of the course is always the aim but this year there was some seriously fast racing at the front end of the bunch. (not that I saw any of that) Day One saw Ron averaging 24km/hr over a relatively firm surface of corrugations. (I was happy to have a max speed of 24km/hr) The sandy sections were enjoyed by the fat tyre crews. There was less variety of surface on the Anne Beadell compared to the Simpson and it did not take long for the corrugated surface to be the talk of the campsites. More so for the cars as fuel tanks dislodged, tyres shredded and articles flew from the roof-racks. The low sand dunes were heavy with sand on the approach and also the downhill. I found it difficult to gather any speed even practising my 'keep the weight to the back, off the front wheel, keep pedalling' rant going around in my head. Day Three was the serious day. We had been warned. Sand would rule today and maybe the fat tyres would finally get a stage win. Also this day would see the afternoon stage with us heading into the glorious tail wind we had enjoyed. And so it came to be. I was swept 16km before the finish of the afternoon stage. 100% would elude me again. More of a concern though was Ron did not win the stage and I had bet my house. No problems - if some 30 year old Danish boy wants to live in my house he is most welcome!! (Simon, Danish but currently living in Greenland won the stage and remarked crossing the finishing line - "I think I have just won a house")

The final two days were the hard slog of continuous corrugations, briefly interrupted multiple times by sandy sections. And of course the head wind.

Andrew Koop completed his fifth 100% finish, Ron Whitehead won on his third attempt (and first 100% finish) and Kathy learnt some more lessons.

In the final analysis 12/24 riders completed 100%, 24/24 riders had a fantastic experience and x/24 are coming back again.

Kathy Moylan (rider #8)

