

## **PERFECT RIDE Hoyleton Sept 2021**

The 70 km ride was planned in two loops. The first was a 23 km loop through the lower reaches of the Skillogalee Valley and the second a 47 km loop that followed the old tramway from Hoyleton to Balaklava and returned through farmlands on the plains.

Kev D led the ride with 3 members – Kev B, Steve and myself.

### **LOOP 1 LOWER SKILLOGALEE VALLEY**

The highlight of the 1<sup>st</sup> loop was the superb colours. The deep green of the grain crops contrasted with the brilliant yellow of the canola crops, interspersed with paddocks of gum trees lining the creeks of the area. We road south from Hoyleton and onto the bitumised Balaklava Road



before turning into Lower Skilly Road where we found our first historic site – the ruins of the Catford Property, one of the first European Settlers of the area – a typical early cottage with only a couple of rooms. In front, the cellar is evident – vital in those early days to keep supplies in cool storage. The galvanised iron roof would have been a later addition as galvanised iron was not imported into SA until 1850.

Just around the corner was a magnificent old mansion (real Lord of the Manor stuff!!). The plaque on the front stone wall says 1847 so I assume that this was the year it was built. On Google Earth this front wall does not exist and the building while still impressive is not in its current state of magnificence. Obviously someone has spent a considerable some of money in refurbishment in recent years. ([Lower Skilly Rd - Google Maps](#)) (Click on the link).





Turning west onto Mount George Road we were sheltered from the strong headwind by the hills – magnificent planning by Kevin!! When we emerged for the long descent back into Hoyleton the steep descent more than compensated for the wind. There was a worrying sign at the start of the descent warning cyclists to take care because of the road conditions (presumably corrugations) but obviously the road crew who repaired the road forgot to tell the sign crew to take down the sign as it was quite smooth. The panoramic view over the plains was spectacular.



## **LOOP 2 HOYLETON TRAMWAY**

At morning tea we spent some time inspecting the old shed – used for storage and loading of farm produce (presumably wheat and wool) onto a horse drawn tram for cartage to Port Wakefield. Unfortunately the shed is showing some signs of decay and needs some preservation work to preserve it for posterity. Hoyleton was the original terminus in 1870 but was soon extended to Blyth and later converted to a railway. The tramway from Hoyleton to Port Wakefield worked well as it was downhill all the way. The horses would be loaded onto a carriage and roll to Port Wakefield and drag the empty wagons back.





The tramway followed the “Gulf Road” used to transport copper from Burra to Port Wakefield (and coal for smelting on the return journey) from 1849 – 1857. This was entirely funded by the smelting company but when it badly needed upgrading the State Government of the day refused to assist, so the copper company simply switched back to the original route to Gawler (and rail to Port Adelaide). Bad luck if you were a hotelier depending on the passing trade of the bullockies with about 2 months notice!! Some 13 years later they funded the tramway for the benefit of a few farmers! Kevin explained that the section near Halbury was raised onto an

embankment to get through “Hell Fire Swamp” – a major difficulty for the bullock wagons hauling copper. The bike path was named after Shamus Liptrot – a local junior cyclist badly injured in cycling accident in Tasmania in 2007 and passed away as a result of his injuries in 2011.



As we neared Balaklava, Kevin took us via Pistol Club Road. The road was marked on Google Earth but seemed to peter out a bit at the end. The group agreed to go for it. As we rode past the pistol club we got a “look” from a man in the car park as if to say “what are you doing”. It turned out to be a magnificent sandy track that only required a bit of walking!



We rode into Balaklava for lunch crossing a historic bridge built in 1890 (to replace the original wooden bridge built by the Burra Copper Smelting Company in 1848 that had burnt down).



Lunch in the well maintained town square in Balaklava. Kevin B was able to get his much needed coffee.

The return to Hoyleton was relatively uneventful with a tail wind all the way. Kevin was unsure about another “road”. Taking it would avoid about 1 km of bitumen. There was a sign pole on the intersection with the street sign removed and a sort of track wandering through the scrub. About 500 m down the “track” it turned sharp right and the crops seemed to come right up to the track with no fence. I suspect that it was a public right-of-way but the farmer had obviously decided to use it as an extension of his paddock. We decided it wasn’t worth any potential agro with an irate farmer so we turned back to the bitumen. The ride from here was relatively uneventful mostly downhill with a tail wind.

On returning to Hoyleton we adjourned to “The Rising Sun” in Auburn for the obligatory debriefing session.

A great Ride – Thanks Kevin

Peter H