

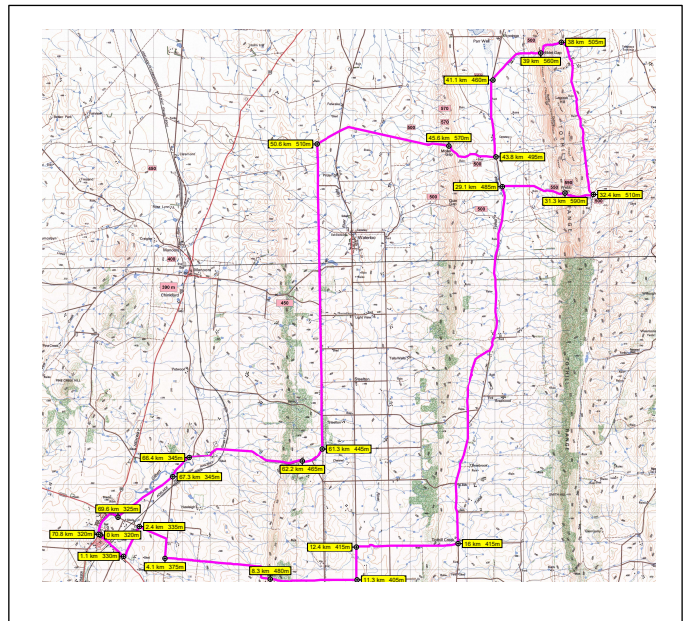
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## PERFECT RIDE – SADDLEWORTH.

06 / 03/ 2022.

The PERFECT ride for March 2022 was from Saddleworth. Saddleworth is a small town in the Mid North region of South Australia, approximately 110km north of Adelaide. The town is situated on the Gilbert River and along with neighbouring towns of Riverton, Rhynie and Tarlee the local area is known as the Gilbert Valley. The town is bisected by the Barrier Highway. At the 2016 census, Saddleworth had a population of 470.

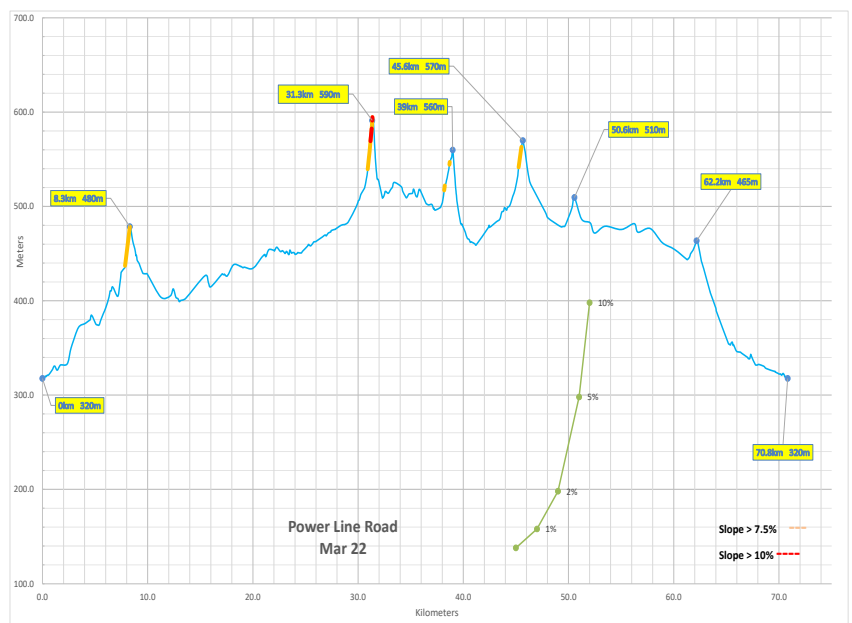
Saddleworth was originally established as one of many settlements on the road to Burra, and was named after Saddleworth Lodge pastoral station, a local landholding which itself was named after a civil parish on the edges of the Pennines in Yorkshire, England. Joseph Dunn applied for a Publican's Licence to open a new Saddleworth Lodge in March 1846, and it was granted on the 14th of March 1846. The Burra railway line passed through the town from 1870 until the early 2000s.



The ride was to be an anticlockwise loop of approximately 71km, north of Saddleworth. Mostly dirt roads with some bitumen at start and finish. For this ride the group consisted of 4 riders, Peter (ride leader), Roger, Brianna and Steve.

The weather on the day was a cool 14° with a few showers early but warming to a sunny 23° later, with a 12kph SE breeze, gusting to 39kph. The vertical gain was a total of 850m.

See ride profile opposite:



We headed off shortly after 9:00am in an easterly direction out of Saddleworth towards Tothill Creek (another of those virtually empty towns in the mid north long past their prime).



Apart from an obligatory phone call we covered this section of the the ride in quick time.

***Right: The road to Tothill***



After seeing the sights of Tothill Creek we turned northward and headed towards the Tothill Range and Webb Gap. The SE breeze was on our back and the road surface was hard gravel enabling us to again cover this section in good time. We had morning tea at café de roadside mid way.

Our progress somewhat slowed on the ascent of Webb Gap. The last section of the climb was approximately 10% or better (hence the term “push bike”). My record with Webb Gap is not great, ie. Webb Gap 2, me 0. The descent proved to be much faster. Those with good mountain bike skills made the most of it.



***Above: Webb Gap***





We continued on and turned northward again and were making good progress when we had a problem - "It's only flat on the bottom". The decision was made to put more air into the tyre and see if we can make it to the top of Niblet Gap, where it could be repaired whilst we stopped for lunch. Mission accomplished !

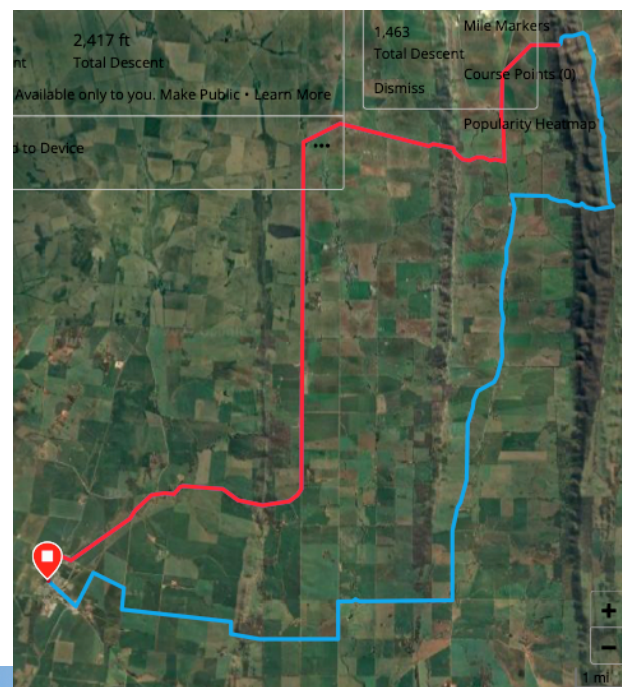
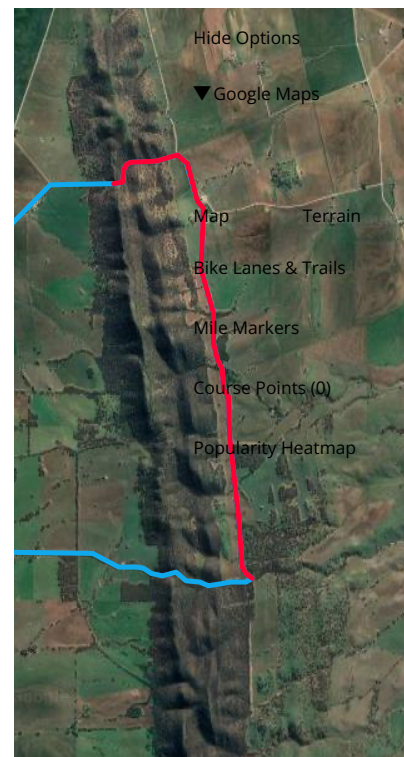
The initial descent from Niblet Gap was again not for the faint hearted, but all navigated their way to the bottom without issue. Unfortunately the lunchtime repair didn't last and further repairs were necessary at the bottom of the descent. Thanks Brianna for the extra spare.

Repairs now completed we were soon on our way to Mohler Gap, then southward to Saddleworth. Having read the ride brief for this section we all looked forward to the trip back to Saddleworth

*" via a lonnnnnng downhill. The last 8 km is all down hill. The last 25 km from Mohler Gap is mostly downhill all the way".* Now having crested Mohler Gap we decided to put this theory to the test and instigated a "free wheel event". Fair to say this ride lived up to the "PERFECT" ride expectations. Whilst it was generally downhill, there were ample undulations and together with the SE breeze in our faces it made for a somewhat less than gentle return to Saddleworth.

The final 2k of the adventure were on bitumen. This made for a very reasonable pace back to town and after a total ride time of 4hrs and 37mins, (averaging 15.2 kph), a much anticipated "ride debrief" was held at the Saddleworth Hotel.

Another great ride, .....**PERFECT**



SteveC. 13/03/2022

