





## May Spokesman Contents...

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### REGULAR CLUB RIDES

**Saturday** rides depart at 9:00am from regular departure points around the city. These rides include a mid-ride café stop, so remember to bring a few dollars. Rides are about 30-40kms and are usually completed by midday. For detailed ride information, view the Club's website and select 'Rides Programme' from the menu.

**Sunday** rides depart at 9:00am from differing venues. This is an all-day ride, usually in the country, and can be anything from 50-100kms. A café stop is hopefully included mid-morning. Also, remember to bring your lunch! For detailed ride information, view the Club's website and select 'Rides Programme' from the menu.

**Wednesday** rides leave at 9:30am from The Bakehouse Café, Kumeu. This is a ride in the country and can be anything from 30 - 60kms, including a mid-morning café stop. Remember to bring your lunch!

**3rd Wednesday Month Ride** 9.30am departure from Ron Keat Drive, Papakura at the back of the railway station. This ride will wait for the 9.20am train to arrive. A leader will be decided on the day but Bill Pepler [peplers@ihug.co.nz](mailto:peplers@ihug.co.nz), 09 266 6846, 021 073 7019 is the coordinator and contact for new people who want to try out this ride. **NB: the usual Wednesday rides from Kumeu are unchanged.**

*Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the contributors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ACTA editor and/or ACTA. committee. Readers should exercise their own judgement when considering technical matters or any other information/advice.*



# Hi and welcome to your May Spokesman...

As Di Michels mentioned in the previous issue of the Spokesman, I have agreed to take over as Editor of your Spokesman magazine. ACTA owes Di many thanks for her contribution to ACTA. I fully appreciate she will be a hard act to follow because of her talents as an artist/ graphics designer and the IT knowledge she and husband, Roel, have. For those of you who are unaware of this, I refer you to Di's "Kiwi Cycling" website [www.kiwicycling.com](http://www.kiwicycling.com). It is also good to learn that Di will maintain her membership of ACTA even though she will be spending a lot of time in Taupo. Who knows? She might be able to arrange some weekend rides for ACTA around the Taupo area!

Year 2017 will be an unusual one for my wife, Gaye, and I, in that it is the first year that we have decided to undertake **three overseas cycling tours!**

As a result of our positive feedback concerning the Japan cycling tour we undertook in May 2016, a group of 10 ACTA members (including Gaye and I) rode in **Japan** in April this year enjoying the cherry blossoms. Refer Sarah's article on Page 17.

An advertisement in a recent ACTA *Anniedotes* concerning a cycle tour in **Vietnam** peaked both our interest and that of John Briers, and we will be cycling with a Kiwi group from Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon) up to Hanoi in July.

We are also honoured to be part of a select ACTA group of 8 persons that will be riding in **Spain** (the Costa Blanca and both South and North Majorca) in September/ October. We have Colin Webster to thank for organizing this.

With regard to the SPOKESMAN, it is both my intention and hope to keep you up-to-date over the ensuing months, not only with articles related to ACTA activities, but also with information from *Auckland Transport* concerning plans in respect of cycle tracks around Auckland and other Auckland activities involving cyclists. Sadly, I am still waiting for Auckland Transport to contact me!

Likewise, it is good to see that some of our older members, who feel they might be getting a bit slow on regular organized ACTA rides, wish to maintain their membership and continue camaraderie with members by investing in *e-bikes*. As a consequence, while information related to e-bikes can always be "googled", it is my intention to include some helpful information in respect of e-bikes in forthcoming issues. However, we are fortunate to have sufficient interesting articles on tours by ACTA members in this May Issue.

The SPOKESMAN will be issued in late February, May, August and November. *Happy reading*, and I hope the forthcoming issues are of interest to you. Also, *happy riding!*



*It is common, when having your picture taken in Japan, to show the international Peace Sign*

Your new Editor,

Stu Andrews

## Message from your President...

*For those of you who were not present at the AGM held on Saturday 25 March 2017, below is a summary of the **Presidents Report AGM 2017, 2016 -2017 year.***

The club has had another successful year delivering 3 rides a week, numerous weekends away and tours. This year we even had a London chapter when it turned out that we had 6 ACTA members in London at the same time. It is fantastic to have such an enthusiastic group of members and when new members join they appreciate the welcome and advice they receive from longer term members. We are however much more than a cycling club and the support and friendship is an invaluable resource.

Your committee has had a productive year, albeit with the Secretary and President playing email tag for a large part of the year. We will attempt to be in the same city a bit more often this year but after all we are a touring group and you can't do that sitting around on your bum (not on a bike!) all year!

We have some changes to the committee for next year so have to say farewell to some of our group.

- Ron Jackson is resigning as treasurer, but has agreed to stay on the committee to continue to offer his expertise in tour and ride planning. It has been very reassuring to have had the club funds in such good hands!
- I would like to express a big thank you to Di Michels who has unfortunately had to give up editing the Spokesman after a large number of years due to a change of home location and lack of easy Internet!! Di has done a superb job of putting out a very professional looking Spokesman and sourcing materials from all over for this.
- Chris Brooks is also leaving the committee this year but is continuing to collect our rides statistics and lead her Saturday ride. We are grateful for her support over the years.

I would like to thank the committee for their input this year especially for keeping the home fires burning when people are off touring. Many thanks to Louise for coming onboard in the secretary position and also for her input in planning and leading tours. And a special thanks to Tony for putting together the rides list each quarter. A lot of time is involved with this. We hope with using Ride with GPS we will be able to streamline this in the future, with routes available to be downloaded. We do always need more people to step forward to lead rides. You can be provided with a route either electronically or in turn by turn directions and there is always support available for the leader.

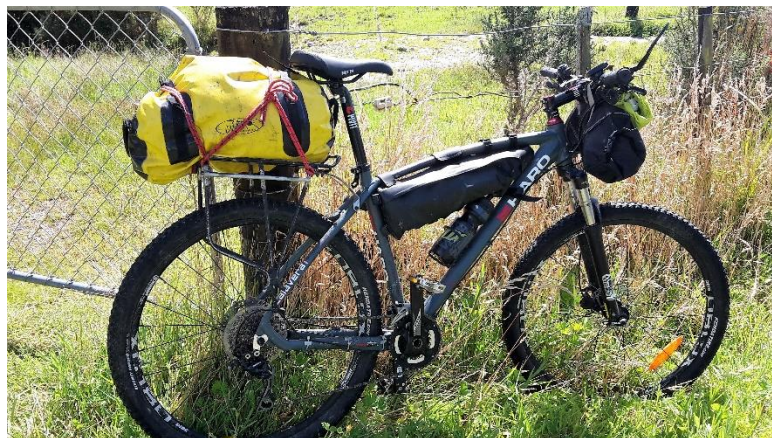


## The Old Ghost Road on 2 Beer Bottle Tops by Bill Duffy

The challenge and mystery of this road (which is really a rough tramping track!) got to me after Robyn and I walked a little way in from Lyell, in the upper Buller River Gorge a couple of years ago. We had recently bought ourselves “Hard tail” mountain bikes with hydraulic disk brakes and enjoyed cycling most of the Great Taste trails in the Nelson area.

I checked out the web site and found that it isn't for the faint hearted and it is the longest tramping track in N.Z at 85 km. graded severe for MTB ie. 3-5. Also, it is remote and has a variety of scenery from river gorges, towering podocarp forest, and about 10km alpine section, with fabulous views above the bush line. The other appeal to me is that it GOES somewhere, exiting at Seddonville, 50km north of Westport, so a round trip was in order.

I would have preferred to have someone with me, but in a short time frame it wasn't possible. Some people said I was mad, but that added to the adventure and I was mindful that no mistakes could be made! I flew to Nelson, picked up my bike, and packed it with the gear I thought necessary. I wasn't entirely happy with my setup, so was very pleased to get MTB touring advice from one of the staff at Kelvin's Bike shop. I am so grateful to them because the required setup is different to road touring. I had about 10-12kg of gear. They said to me “Too much gear! Make it 5-6kg because of the hill climbing etc.” That meant no primus, no tent, no plates, cup, or billy. However, the huts are beautifully set up. I then bought a bar bag and a handlebar dry bag at Kelvin's Bike Shop and a survival blanket. I could not find the right bags in Auckland.... Boy! They are sure set up well in that little Nelson shop! See photos of bike.



I had pre-booked the huts paying on line. Luckily, the forecast was good for the 1<sup>st</sup> 2 days. That was a bit of a fluke coming from Auckland, as it is a high rainfall area!

So, on the morning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Jan. I was dropped off at Lyell, (30kms down river from Murchison.) courtesy of the City Link bus. Lyell was once a thriving gold mining town, but all there is now is a DOC shelter. I started assembling my bike accompanied with many unwelcome sandflies (Handle bars were turned 90 degrees, wheels and derailleur off and chain wrapped). Much to my dismay, I discovered that the rear wheel nut was missing, it had vibrated off in transit!! I had a spare small nut and washer that fitted the skewer but now needed a large washer. Cars were coming out from the short road into Lyell. The 3<sup>rd</sup> car I flagged down had a resourceful Kiwi driver who rummaged around and found me a **beer bottle top**. I said I need 2, as 1 wouldn't be strong enough! He found me another and we punched a hole in them with a Phillips screw driver and then I was in business... Phew! I eventually bought another skewer at the nearest bike shop, Westport, 140km further on!





*The Beer Bottle Top Washers*

Three and a half hours later I was at Lyell saddle hut having climbed mostly for the 18km. Approx. the first 13km was built in the 1890s as a "Dray track" at an easy gradient of 4.5% but never finished. Originally it was about 2m wide but is now about 600mm with plenty of small wash outs, slips and fallen trees, generally a fun ride AND in some places had big drop offs. It was so nice to get away from cars and trucks and enjoy the peace! The hut, nestled in the saddle at over 3000 ft. (900m) has a beautiful view to the remote ranges to the west. I had a cup of tea with 4 cyclists who were carrying on to the Ghost Lake Hut. That night my only companions were an opossum, a billy goat (happily hanging around the hut) and a few screeching wekas. There were not many people on the track because the weather "Bomb" that had passed through a couple of days before had put people off and there was track damage in places.

I thought that the first day was challenging at Grade 3-4, but was in for a surprise for the alpine section to Ghost lake hut and then a 3000 ft descent to Stern Valley hut. Grade 3-5. This was the most spectacular part of the trip and because of fine weather and no wind it was very enjoyable. There was ominous high cloud though, but on the top ridges at over 4000 feet (1200m), I could see as far as the Nelson lakes mountains.... very beautiful vistas!





My motto of “If in doubt get off the bike” worked as it was too risky to ride on a rock strewn, 500mm wide path with 500 foot (150m) drop offs! So I just took my time on the second day, and walked about 6km of the 28km.



I made myself a cup of tea at the empty Ghost Lake hut then descended to the spectacular Skyline Ridge from where I could see the farmland of the Seddonville area still 45km away. It doesn't sound very far, but MTB speeds average about 4-5 km per hour! The last 10 km downhill, on a switchback track to Stern Valley hut was exhilarating. It was now raining and the rivers came up overnight.

Day 3 (25km) took me through to Specimen Creek Hut. Again, this is a first rate hut with a fabulous view of the mighty Mokihinui River, which was now roaring in full flood. I had had an exciting ride through the Bone yard (large boulder strewn 300m climb). This was actually a massive slip that had come down in the 1929 Murchison earthquake.

After the saddle climb, I descended and rode a few hours through mostly virgin and pristine podocarp forest, frequently fording streams on a track that was now awash with water, as it rained for the entire day. I managed to get a roaring fire going at the hut and dried my gear.

Again, oddly I was to spend a third night as the only person in the hut, the only sounds were from the rivers and the numerous wekas!

Day 4 the rivers were receding and 17 km through the spectacular Mokihinui Gorge took me to the Seddonville Pub. The food and the beer had a special taste as my food supplies had diminished!!

Over the next few days I cycled back to Nelson via Westport and Murchison. The hard ride from Murchison to the summit of Hope saddle was rewarded with a mainly 60km downhill to Nelson via the recently opened 1.3 km Spooner rail tunnel (Headlamp essential) and thence by the Great Taste cycle ways.



## Gear list:

- 1) Personal Locator Beacon
- 2) Sleeping bag and survival blanket 1kg
- 3) Food for 3 days 2kg
- 4) 2 sets of merino underwear, parka, shorts and lycra top, merino top personal gear etc. 1kg
- 5) Spare nuts bolts, large tyre sleeve, puncture repair, tube, nylon ties, nylon cord, duct tape, tools, oil, pump 0.75kg
- 6) Water bottle. No shortage of fresh water!
- 7) Matches.
- 8) Dry bags with gear also in plastic bags. (At one stage I was in waist deep water!)

There was cell ph. coverage in some places on the tops.

Fortunately, I had no punctures, and, being a new bike, everything was in good condition. The only other mishap was the gear cable coming adrift, which I fixed back with nylon ties.

Tyre pressure 30-40 psi worked well with rocks varying from 100mm to 300 mm diameter. With the help of front suspension (travel of up to 120mm.), hydraulic disk brakes were a delight to use. The bike is a 27 inch Haro MTB, gearing 18in to 90in. Being a hard tail, it was OK for road use and I upped the tyre pressure to 50 psi for that. Most people doing the trail use dual suspension bikes, which are more specialized and certainly have a better performance on the rough stuff, but more limited on roads. I could have done with some higher gears with a tail wind and long down hills in to Nelson as I couldn't go over about 35 kph.



## Cycle-touring in Tasmania by Colin Quilter

Recently I spent 26 days cycling around Tasmania. I went alone, because I've been having problems with low blood pressure, and if that recurred then I wanted to be able to slow down or stop without worrying about delaying others in a group. I camped every night, because that's my preference. I took four days off from cycling to go walking in various National Parks because..... why wouldn't you? Here are my thoughts about cycling in Tasmania, in case others are interested in going.

**What Tasmania has to offer.** A big island with a long and interesting coastline, and a mountainous interior. Distinctly different east and west coasts, (one dry, low-lying and relatively sheltered, the other wet, exposed to powerful westerly winds, and more hilly). Distances which are relatively modest and within the scope of cyclists, (unlike mainland Australia which is a huge country, with distances which would intimidate most cyclists). A flora and fauna very different to NZ with eucalypt forests, marsupials and a variety of parrots.

**Getting there.** I flew Auckland – Melbourne – Hobart and return. My flights were ticketed by Air NZ, (although the Melbourne – Hobart leg was operated by Virgin Australia) and at Auckland Airport I was able to check in both my bag and bike all the way through to Hobart; (ditto on the return flight). It was nice not having to pick up or handle the bike in Melbourne. The return fare cost NZ\$673.

**Transporting my bike.** I packed it in a canvas bag, ("Tardis" from Ground Effect). At Hobart airport I reassembled the bike, and cycled to a nearby campground (at Seven Mile Beach). The campground staff were willing to store my bike bag for the duration of my trip, on the understanding that I would also spend my last night with them. At the end of the trip I cycled out to the airport (with the bag, string, cellotape and bubble-wrap), and re-packed the bike. This worked out really well; there are just two things to be cautious about. Firstly, there is no doubt that a bag does not offer as much protection as a carton, and on the Auckland – Hobart leg my bike suffered some small damage to the front brakes, due, I presume, to crushing in the cargo hold. Fortunately, it was damage I could fix. Secondly, you need to choose a return flight which departs sufficiently late in the morning so that you have time to cycle to the airport and dismantle the bike. It takes me about 2 hours to do the job.

**My route in Tasmania.** If you look at a road map of Tasmania, there is a circular route which immediately suggests itself, especially since it passes through or near to many National Parks. The circuit is about 1,300km long, so you might expect to take between 2 and 3 weeks to make the journey. If you add some days for walking rather than cycling as I did; and if you add some cycling side-trips as I did, then you can easily spend 26 days getting around the state. I did the circuit in an anticlockwise direction.





**Accommodation.** I camped every night, mostly in campgrounds or caravan parks. Some were within National Parks, some were commercial campgrounds and holiday parks, some were low-cost campgrounds operated by local authorities in show-grounds or reserves. I freedom-camped several nights, (indeed I could probably have done the whole trip that way, by heading a kilometer or two down quiet side-roads and looking for a secluded spot in the bush). However, since I was travelling alone, I looked forward to meeting other travellers in the evening, and had some memorable conversations in campground kitchens. In Tasmania, the campgrounds were dominated by “grey nomads” in their caravans and motor-homes; or in some places by young backpackers staying long-term in the campground while they did seasonal fruit-picking work in orchards nearby. I found the caravan parks to be quite expensive, especially near popular holiday destinations; several times I was charged AU\$30 per night. Elsewhere, and in National Parks, AU\$15-20 per night was more common. I cooked for myself, buying food day by day in local supermarkets. Over the whole trip, (and excluding air fares), my average daily spend was NZ\$55 per day; this covered camp fees, food, coffee & cake, ferry fares, and everything else.



*FREEDOM CAMPING*

**Other traffic.** Tasmanians drive fast. They favour SUVs and 4WD vehicles which are often small trucks rather than cars. Their off-road tires make a distinctive sound at speed on an asphalt road, so you can hear them coming. However, they mostly swerve widely to pass cyclists, and, if they can't overtake safely, they are much more willing than NZ drivers to slow down, tuck in behind the cyclist, and wait for a chance to pass when the road is clear. A policewoman told me that Tasmanian state government has recently run a publicity campaign encouraging motorists to “*give bikes 1.5m when overtaking*” which has perhaps made a difference. The only motorists I came to really dislike were groups of motorcyclists. Typically, they travel at high speed, and they go past like bullets. What they see or experience at that speed, encased in a helmet and body armour of leather and corduroy, is difficult to know. I suppose just the howl of the engine, the buffeting of the wind, and the intoxicating stink of petrol!

**Hills.** Before I left NZ, when I mentioned cycling in Tasmania to friends, they invariably warned me about the hills. Certainly, there are a few, but I found them much less difficult than expected. On my route, there were perhaps five big ones, but none took longer than about an hour and a half to climb, and the grades were never severe. I never had to dismount and push the bike. The biggest climb was a side-trip up a dirt ski-field access road in Mt Field National Park, 9km of continuous steep climbing. Coming back down was the worst

part. Although I didn't have to pedal a single stroke, the descent took 40 minutes with hands clenched on the brakes. I stopped half-way down to give my hands a rest, and to let the wheel rims cool down, (they were hot to the touch from friction of the brake pads!).

**Climate and Temperatures.** My trip fell between mid-February and mid-March. I had great weather; a few days of showers at the beginning and end of the trip, and 18 days of continuous fine weather in between. With clear skies, nights were cool, sometimes cold. Often, I woke to fog or mist which hung about the trees for an hour or two. I wished I had taken warm gloves and a beanie, and usually wore my rain jacket for warmth until about 10am. By mid-day I was cycling in shirt-sleeves, and by mid-afternoon the temperature sometimes exceeded 30 degrees. Hobart is at about the same latitude as Christchurch in NZ, so perhaps those temperatures are about what one might expect in late summer.

**Fauna and Flora.** Amazing! It's hard to know where to begin. I think Tasmanians (perhaps Australians in general?) don't appreciate their unique wildlife. The number and variety of animals killed on their roads on a nightly basis is staggering and disheartening; a little less speed on the part of motorists would save many of them.

**Highlights.** Definitely, for me, the main highlights were the National Parks. I spent two days out on Maria Island, off the east coast. The entire island is a National Park, with about 20km of dirt roads, but only three vehicles (which belong to the Park Rangers). I had wallabies peering in the doorway of my tent, wombats shuffling around outside, kangaroos nearby, parrots overhead..... and my cycling gloves were eaten by a Tasmanian Devil. What a privilege! Well worth the cost of another pair.



*Nosey Wallaby about to poke it's nose in my tent*





Above: *Spikey Echidna*

Left: *Wombats are heavy*



Above: *Remains of glove after being munched as a "delicious meal"? by a Tasmanian Devil*

**The psychology of cycle-touring.** During this trip, perhaps because I was alone, I spent time thinking about my own approach to cycle-touring. I noticed that at the beginning of the trip I was rather goal-oriented. I studied the map. I measured distances, estimated time to the next town, looked at the hills which lay ahead and noted their elevations. I decided, ahead of time, where I would stop for the night. I looked at my cycle computer several times each hour to see how far I had come since breakfast. However after about 10 days on the road I settled into a much more tranquil rhythm. I paid less attention to distances, times and destinations. I cycled more slowly and I stopped more often. I thought more about the moment, and I looked ahead no further than the next coffee or lunch stop. The kilometers began to roll by almost un-noticed, and sometimes when I looked at my cycle computer at the end of the day I was surprised to see how far I had come. This, I decided, was a much happier frame of mind for a cycle tourist, (at least, for this cycle-tourist), and next time I will try to achieve that tranquility sooner, rather than later.

If you want to see a photo-diary of my trip, there's one posted on the ACTA website "gallery." Happy pedaling!



# Unsupported ACTA Tour March 2017

by Geoff Phillips and Warwick Lord

The tour started at **Minda Hills Farm**, which is situated **just out of Taihape** and is owned by Lorraine and Mark Illston, Massey University friends of Louise and Andrew. They specialise in breeding Perendale sheep. They made us very welcome as we stayed overnight with them before heading off on the ride the next day. This was the start of one of the features of the tour, which was *the rural hospitality* that we experienced all along the way.



*The Team*

The first day's ride was from **Minda Hills farm to the Rangaitikei River Valley Lodge**. For morning tea, we went to the farm of Phillipa and John, also friends of Louise and Andrew. We enjoyed sausage rolls and cream scones. It was a reasonably easy day on the backcountry shingle roads as we ended the day with a descent down to the Rangitikei River Lodge. A very nice meal was enjoyed at the lodge as well as a welcome beer.

The second day involved a ride on a steep shingle road up to the **Taihape Napier road and then on up the Gentle Annie to the Kuripapango Hut**. It was hard work on the gravel, which had been recently graded and in parts and was very hard to navigate. There was very little traffic though.



*Day One Morning Tea!*



*Taihape Napier Rd*



When we reached the Gentle Annie, most of us had to resort to a bit of walking. As we neared the top, Phillipa and John passed us and mentioned as they went by that they would have some *cold beers* ready when we reached the hut. Seldom has beer tasted as good! To top it all off, Phillipa had baked a large bacon and egg pie, which was very much appreciated.



*Ngaruroro River*



*Kuripapango Hut*

The next day we rode from the **Kuripapango hut to Hastings** - a distance of 74kms. There was, firstly, a climb out of the valley followed by some long downhills on a very hot day. We were anticipating finding a café before arriving in Hastings, but there were none to be found so we were somewhat dehydrated by the time we rode into town.



*Ride down to Napier/ Hastings*

In Hastings, we stayed at the “Top Ten” camp, which had a swimming pool and reasonable amenities. After a rest day, we headed for morning coffee to **Havelock North and then rode 68 kms to Waipawa**. There was a heavy shower of rain overnight and JB had a small leak in his tent. Sadly, at this point, Geoff left us and headed for home on the bus because of sickness.

The next day we set off from **Waipawa heading to Porangahau, which was about 70kms**. Unfortunately, there were no cafes or shops along the way, but we stopped at a small country school at Omakere where we were invited in for coffee, which was very pleasant. Then it was on to Black Head Road to ride out to the coast. We then followed the coast down to Porangahau, with a couple of stops for black berries. The weather had settled down so we expected to get a good night’s sleep.

The next day, riding from **Porangahau to Akitio** was a great ride through the hills and quiet country roads. We had a short stop, to photograph the hill with the world's longest place name. The name "**Taumatawhakatangihangakoauauotamateaturipukakapikimaungahoronukupokaiwhenuakitanatahu**" translates roughly as "*The summit where Tamatea, the man with the big knees, the slider, climber of mountains, the land-swallower who travelled about, played his [nose flute](#) to his loved one*". We then we rode on to the Wimbeldon hotel for a morning tea break. We made it to Akitio early in the afternoon. We rested up and then went to dinner at Murray and Donna's house where we were served crayfish, Paua fritters, venison steak, homemade sausages, lamb chops and lots of salads. This was another *back-country hospitality highlight!*

Day 10 we rode from **Akitio to Pongaroa**, which was a relatively hard ride through the hills to Glenross backpackers on a sheep farm, which was previously the shearer's quarters. The lady who owns the farm had baked us some caramel crunch and there was fresh milk in the fridge. It was very comfortable, considering it is in *the middle of nowhere*. The courtesy vehicle from Pongaroa hotel came and picked us up for dinner. This is a nice friendly place with great meals. The rain started about midnight.

We set off the next morning with some light drizzle to ride up **Rimu Rd heading to Pahiatua**. This was a gravel road and it felt like we were climbing for about thirteen kilometres. Despite the weather, it was picturesque as the low cloud was drifting over the hills. We eventually hit a tar seal road and climbed some more to reach the top of the range. From there, it was all downhill to Pahiatua. It was still raining and we were totally soaked so we didn't stop for a snack. We just put "the pedal to the metal" and headed to the cafe. We hadn't seen a real cafe for about four days, so the race was on. We found a great bakery in Pahiatua and, when we pulled up looking like a half starved drowned rats, we had to strip off, dry ourselves and find some dry clothes. After that, it was large coffees, meat pies, chocolate eclairs, cheese toasted sandwiches and everything else that looked yummy. With full stomachs and dry clothes, we set off over **the Pahiatua track to Palmerston North**. Warwick's rear tyre was starting to deform and Kathy's front tyre was due for replacement so, after we climbed to the top of the hill, we had to keep the brakes on and take it easy down the other side. We arrived in "Palmy" early in the afternoon and set off on our different ways to do what we had to do. We had a rest day in Palmerston North. The weather was showery. There was a field day sports expo in the square where Valerie Adams won the gumboot throwing competition and we all took time out to relax and recharge.

Next day, we set off from **Palmerston North to Pohangina valley** with light rain falling and rode north on the river trail, which goes quite some distance and kept us away from the traffic. We eventually stopped at the Herb farm at Ashurst for morning coffee, which was great and in a very nice setting. From Ashurst, we set off up the Pohangina Valley, which is a surprisingly long and relatively straight road. Eventually, we arrived at Totara reserve, which is a great stand of native Bush. The reserve is well looked after with camping areas, swimming access in the river and even a wedding chapel in the forest! We ate our lunch, then headed off to the Pohangina base DOC hut, where we stayed the night. There was a drying room that we made great use of and prepared ourselves for another day of wet weather.

Next day we set off from **Pohangina Valley to Ohingaiti** with light rain again. It got heavier, then there were a couple of fine patches, and the temperature took a dive. It was tar seal all the way and plenty of hills. The cloud was down and we were unable to see the Ruahine ranges. We stopped at Apiti for morning tea then cycled on to Rangawahia where we stopped for lunch sheltering at the local hall. There is a nice well looked after area at the rear of the hall available to travellers to take a rest. We were a bit cold by then so we set off again for the last leg to Ohingaiti pub where we had nice dry comfortable accommodation, roast dinner and desert and a couple of drinks. We were hoping for a fine day on our final day.

On the last day, we set off from **Ohingaiti back to Minda Hills**, once again in damp weather and headed for the watershed road that was to lead us all the way back to our starting point. This was a gravel road that took us way up into the hills with spectacular views of the Taihape hill country. It was getting quite cold when we reached the top, so we kept on going until reached the farmhouse of another of Louise and Andrews friends and we were invited in for a very welcome cup of tea and some home baking. After that recharge, we were told it was all downhill except for a couple of uphill's back to Minda Hills farm. It didn't take us too long and once we had had another cup of tea and packed up the vehicles we were off back to Auckland. We dodged most of the rain that other parts of the country experienced and it was a very successful, interesting tour with great hospitality along the way. Thanks to Louise for a well organised tour with great route planning.



# Japan Cherry Blossom Tour April 2017 by Sarah Ley-Bucherer



*Japanese April Cherry Blossoms (Sakura)*

Ten ACTA riders keenly anticipated this tour of a lifetime to cycle in Japan at cherry blossom time. As Stu and Gaye raved about their trip last year, we looked forward to experiencing it for ourselves – the culture, the food and the historical sites whilst cycling new roads and pathways. The team consisted of Deb Payne, Alan Small, Leslie Crang, Judy Barfoot, Maurice Kwan, David Reid, Simon and Sarah Bucherer and Gaye and Stu Andrews. And, of course, our leader extraordinaire Thomas, the owner of Japan Biking.



*Our Group having climbed approx. 840m to the Buddhist Mountain Town of Koyasan where the temperature at the time was just below 8 degrees Centigrade*



Our accommodation, pre-booked by the tour guide, definitely gave us brief insights into how Japanese people live. We stayed at a huge range of places from a shitake mushroom farmer's home to traditional Japanese inns that originated in the Edo period (ryokans or guest houses), to a temple accommodation and more Western style hotels. The ryokans were a wonderful experience but, at times, challenged us kiwis with stiff hip and knee joints. Traditional Japanese ways see them happily sit on the floor (none of us could manage the cross-legged pose for any length of time), eat off very low tables and sleep on futons with abnormally firm pillows. We all really loved the communal bathing in onsens (hot springs), separate for men and women of course, and terrific for very tired cycling legs. Our only challenges were having no understanding of the instructions or signs in Japanese! Were we going to open a door to the steam room, a toilet, private bath or was it an emergency exit? None of us wanted to be expelled to the outside with nothing on but a small wet hand towel. Also, the containers of shampoo, soap, conditioner, body lotion – some of us found out the hard way when what looked like shampoo turned out to be body lotion. We all enjoyed wearing the traditional yukata – a dressing gown like robe ready in our room on arrival. Our yukatas saved us having to think about what to wear after cycling and, as we commented, helped keep our clothes clean when food dropped off our chopsticks!



*Early morning walk in Hinaru*



*Breakfast at the "Beer Baron's" house in Uchiko*



*Our Ryokan (Guest House) in Nara*

Our food experiences were truly wonderful. Judy counted 11 different dishes at one breakfast meal. Most meals were a range of Japanese foods with a prevalence of fish dishes in the south. Our driver Totoke-san pointed out that our fish was getting bigger the further north we travelled. The small ones (whole fish grilled on an open flame) we ate completely in a few mouthfuls but, as they got bigger, Totoke-san gave us a lesson on removing the head, backbone and tail all in one go. Of course, some of us were more successful than others, but it proved a lot of fun and some fierce competition around the table. Thomas did his best to ensure we tried various specialities of the area we cycled through. We started our journey in the old district of Satsuma (now Kagoshima prefecture) on the southern island of Kyushu so citrus trees were everywhere and were lovely and refreshing for our snack breaks. Pomelos (like huge grapefruit) were popular as well as mandarins and oranges. We even had pomelos floating in our onsen at a traditional hot springs stop (Hinagu). Unfortunately, I didn't keep a record of all the delights we tasted, instead relying on taking photos before the meals, but then missed the additional dishes that turned up as we ate. Our Japanese hosts took such care to serve us beautifully presented food. Prior to the meals, the table looked resplendent with exotic foods. We even had some cherry blossoms (sakura) on the menu at some places.



*Welcome Dinner in Izumi. Our host, Thomas, did not wear a yukata because he was cycling home after dinner*



*Dinner at Government Hotel in mountain town of Yamoto*



*Dinner in Buddhist Temple accommodation in mountain town of Koyasan*





Amazing dish – mushrooms for dinner at Yamoto

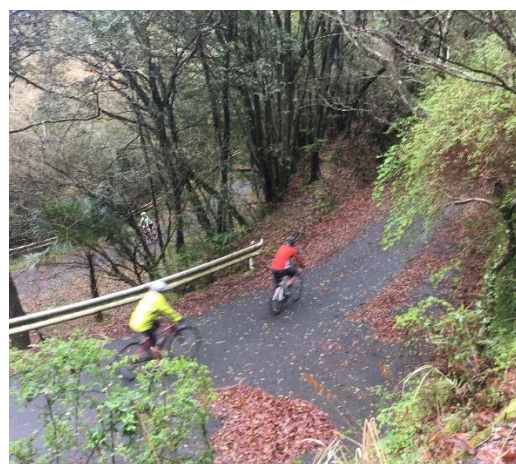


Lunch next day Mt Aso – you eat the chargrilled salted fish whole



Typical table setting prior to sitting down to eat

We all took great pleasure in seeing and joining in the special Cherry Blossom celebrations keenly anticipated by the Japanese annually. For just 1 week, the people celebrate with flower appreciation picnics (hanami) where selfies, bento boxes, dressing up in traditional clothes and alcohol or other drinks are customary. Luckily for us, we were able to travel through the country and see the blossoms in various stages from just budding, unfurling, in full blossom and then experience the clouds of petals falling like snow around us. The smell too was quite magical when riding through avenues of cherry trees. Needless to say, we took oodles of pictures.



A magic day! Cherry blossoms when riding up from Yawatahama Port upon arrival on Shikoku Island and riding through the leaf litter of the forest on the way down.

Lastly the cycling itself – we all took a little time getting used to our hire bikes made slightly easier by having our own saddles and pedals. With many hills on rural roads and some rainy days we needed brakes tested and adjustments made quite frequently. Thomas did his best to accommodate us. In all, the cycling was quite hilly riding through parts of the islands of Kyushu, Shikoku and Honshu. We missed the extra low gears of our touring bikes, but enjoyed the freedom of walking away from the bikes at the end of our tour with just our saddles and pedals to fit into our baggage.



Thomas, our great Leader, wearing the Kiwi Cycle top presented to him



Despite riding 77km from Hinagu to Yamoto with two lengthy hill climbs, we also **climbed 777 energy sapping steps** at Higashikata Park on the same day!

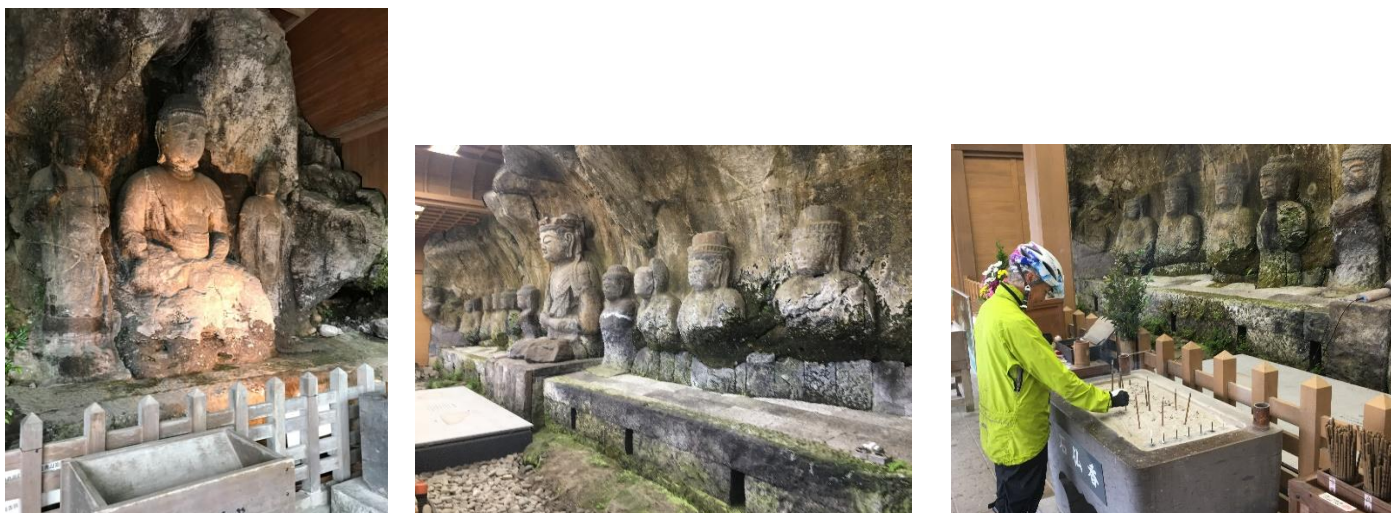


On a rural path on our way from Hinagu to Yamoto





*Several scenes when cycle touring in Japan*



*Usuki Sekibutsu stone Buddhas carved in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries out of a natural rock wall in the cliff face*

*Lesley lighting a joss stick at the stone Buddhas*



*Scenes from Usuki*



*Exercises while waiting to embark on ferry at Usuki*

Our last days we spent sightseeing in Kyoto and Tokyo and marvelled at the efficient rail transport systems and especially the speed of the shinkansens (bullet trains).



*Shinkansen (Bullet Train)*

*Mount Fuji*



# Otorohanga Cycling Weekend May 2017 by Maureen McRae and Tony Simmons

If you were not in Otorohanga on the weekend of 5-6-7 May, you missed a fabulous riding weekend! Sunshine, no wind, no rain, fresh mornings and quiet roads - what more could one ask for? The only price to be paid was rather chilly morning starts.

Three days of brilliant riding were enjoyed by 12-15 members, with most arriving Thursday evening and staying at the Otorohanga Holiday Park, but some had to work Friday and they joined us either late Friday night or early Saturday morning.



*The Group on Friday with Sally and Helen getting excited about the weekend rides!*

It was wonderful to have June Cripps (recently moved from Auckland to New Plymouth) and Pam Rumball (a new member and also from New Plymouth) join us. Having these 'weekends away' out of Auckland allows these more distant members join us. We also had June Cripps and Livia Mandeno on their e-bikes, no doubt wondering how they would go on day-long rides. *(FYI, they, and their bikes both survived the long rides with battery charge to spare!)*

**Friday** there were thirteen, with the men well and truly outnumbered, two to eleven. Tony led the 66km ride with Warwick as "Tail-end Charlie". We headed south to Te Kuiti where we checked out the "Sheep Shearing Statue" (see below), which is rather impressive before fuelling up at Tiffany's cafe. From here we had a decent climb up onto the top of Rangitoto Range where we were rewarded with magnificent views. We were even able to see snow-capped Mt Ruapehu in the distance. It felt like we were "on top of the world" riding along the ridge with 360 degree views. This was followed by a lovely long and switch-backed downhill, then a fairly flat ride back into town following the Waipa River on the Otewa Road. The bonus was there were less than 15-20 vehicles all day. Just bliss. Two people experienced flat tyres on Friday, while another two-people realized their bike pumps were useless since vital pieces had fallen off. A good reminder to check them regularly before they are needed! It was then time to chill out and enjoy the small rural town of Otorohanga, best known for its Kiwi house and Kiwiana Capital of NZ.



*Riding down Rangitoto Road*



*Rural Scenery*



*Sheep Shearing Statue*

The **Saturday** riding group increased, with a couple more arriving overnight and a few local members joining in. We rode a larger loop 90 kms, first heading out on SH 39 for a brief time before heading up Honokiwi hill. After the initial climb, we rode down Turitea road following the stream. A short time later we arrived at the old Tihiroa Hall, which is now converted to Cooper & Co Cafe. Being a beautiful sunny morning we enjoyed our coffees out in the sun.



*Saturday Group*

From the Café we headed across to Te Kawa West before arriving at Te Kawa. We crossed the main road there and headed down past the Waikeria prison before stopping at Korakonui school for our lunch break. This was a great spot, with under cover seating and even the toilet block was open by pure luck. From here, some of the group chose a shorter option while the rest continued on up Mangatutu Road and past Maihihi school, before arriving at Maureen and Peter's home for a coffee. Those who continued on the longer route partook this opportunity to relax on Maureen's and Peter's deck in the sunshine with coffee and cakes close to hand. From there, everyone made their way back into town following the Waipa river, but in the opposite direction to yesterday. On Saturday evening, we enjoyed dinner at the Otorohanga Club, with time for a chat and reflection on the weekend so far.

**Sunday's ride** was shorter, being 37kms, as we still had the long drive home ahead, and for many the rigours of Auckland's motorway traffic to contend with! We drove our cars, in convoy, 30 minutes to Lake Ngaroto, just north to Te Awamutu. At Lake Ngaroto, we left the cars and rode a circuitous route to Pirongia for a cafe stop after only 16kms! Pirongia was swarming with motorbikes on what was another brilliantly fine day and the cafe was very, very busy. Some members also visited the nearby historical Alexandra Redoubt (refer the following link below) The ride back to the cars was along more quiet roads and enjoyable. (<https://nzhistory.govt.nz/media/photo/alexandra-redoubt-0>).

Some members then took the opportunity to ride the 5km track and boardwalk around Lake Ngaroto where a lot of environmental measures are being taken to save the lake and the surrounding wetlands - very interesting. All too soon, it was towards midday and time to say *goodbye* and head home.

Many thanks to the organisers, ride leaders and the "tail-end charlies". The Otorohanga and greater South Waikato area provided wonderful cycling roads. The weather was perfect and total weekend just brilliant.



## A few groan-worthy cycling-related jokes!



- The hardest thing about learning to ride a bicycle is the road!
- Why couldn't the bicycle stand up for itself? Because it was two-tyred.
- Jack and Jill have just climbed a steep hill on a tandem. "Phew, that was a tough climb" said Jack, "I thought I was going to collapse". "Yeah, good job I kept the brakes on" said Jill "or we'd have slid all the way back down!"
- A tandem rider is stopped by a police car. "What've I done, officer?" asks the rider. "Perhaps you didn't notice sir, but your wife fell off your bike half a mile back". "Oh, thank God for that," says the rider - "I thought I'd gone deaf!"
- I was speeding down a narrow, twisting, mountain road. A woman was driving very slowly uphill, honking her horn and shouting at me: "PIG PIG!" I flipped her the finger and shouted back "Bitch" before I collided with a pig!
- Two Nuns were riding a tandem through a medieval town in Europe. The Nun on the back seat (the stoker) remarked "I've never come this way before", the reply "Must be the cobble stones"
- Did You hear the one about the cyclist who didn't know he had diarrhoea until he removed his bike clips!
- Lie flat on your backs, class, and circle your feet in the air as if you were riding your bikes, said the gym teacher. "Fred! What are you doing? Move your feet, boy." "I'm freewheeling, sir!"

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SPOKESMAN

The Spokesman is your club magazine and, as such, it needs interesting articles and items to be published each quarter. The Spokesman is issued at the end of February, May, August and November. The articles/ items can be full editorial articles about trips or interesting snippets of information you may have. When supplying these items to me please send in an electronic format with text as an unformatted "WORD" document and the images or photos as separate files. This will make it easier for me to edit and insert the article into the template I use for publishing. Within the word document indicate where the photos should appear and add a caption. Contributions of other separate photos are appreciated, so I can fill spaces and have something interesting for the front cover and elsewhere. However, they need to have a good resolution so the printed version looks ok. Please give each photo a specific name. Articles can be sent to either: [editor@acta.org.nz](mailto:editor@acta.org.nz) or [stu.andrews@xtra.co.nz](mailto:stu.andrews@xtra.co.nz).

Stu Andrews

# TAIL END CHARLIE



The ACTA “*Tail End Charlie*”, sometimes known in other clubs as the “sweeper” (performing the “sweep” function) is *the rider last in line whose job is to ensure everyone else in the group ride arrives at the destination safely*.

Apparently, the term “Tail End Charlie” originated from World War II and referred to the rear gunner in aircraft bombers. Later, it became a person that brings up the rear in a group or formation.

In ACTA, the person volunteering as “*Tail End Charlie*”, does not necessarily need to be a person with (1) a lot of riding experience, (2) not necessarily the fastest and (3) not necessarily needing a good amount of mechanical experience, although some basic mechanical experience can be useful, should someone have a puncture or “drop” their chain. Perhaps, what should be essential is that the “Tail End Charlie” should have the mobile phone number of the Leader. Likewise, the Leader should stop periodically and be aware of whether the “Tail End Charlie” is coming or is still missing. In the case of the latter, there may be a problem with someone in the group.

So . . .

TAIL END CHARLIE is at THE END