

Team Vaughts on tour with the Lions 8th - 28th July 2025

On 8th July 2025, Simon Catnach (Esher RFC) and Charlie Beardmore (Guys Hospital RFC) boarded a plane taking them to an eclectic Australian cycling challenge which included the opportunity to watch the British and Irish Lions take on the Wallabies. On arrival in Sydney they were met by Paul Terry (Esher RFC), their Chief Logistics Officer, and then proceeded to cycle 1000 miles to raise money for the My Name's Doddie charity, funding research into Motor Neurone Disease (MND), and specifically in support of Andy Vaughton (VAUGHTS to his mates, Guys Hospital RFC player, who has developed MND). They were joined by Bernard Harrington-Vogt (Guys Hospital RFC) for the second leg between Sydney and Melbourne.

The route was varied, and fascinating, requiring numerous late adjustments:

Cycle Day	Date (July)	From	To	Distance (miles)	Climb (m)	Notes
	Tue 8	UK	Qatar			
	Wed 9	Qatar	Sydney			
1	Thu 10	Sydney	Morisset	61	1712	Stay at Wyong
2	Fri 11	Morisset	Bulahdelah	87	1364	Cycle Wyong to Morisset
3	Sat 12	Bulandelah	Port Macquarie	87	1060	
4	Sun 13	Port Macquarie	Coffs Harbour	79	712	
5	Mon 14	Coffs Harbour	Iluka	90	1000	
6	Tue 15	Iluka	Gold Coast	89	875	
7	Wed 16	Gold Coast	Brisbane	63	1050	
	Thu 17	Brisbane	Brisbane	556	7773	REST DAY
8	Fri 18	Flinders	Beer Burrum	49	500	Time Trial. Aussie Rules in evening
	Sat 19	Brisbane	Brisbane			1 st TEST Lions win 27-19
	Sun 20	Brisbane	Sydney			DRIVE 10 hrs
9	Mon 21	Sydney	Drive 214 miles then cycle	79	1132	Drop off and cycle to Jugiong
10	Tue 22	Jugiong	Wagga Wagga	103	1370	
11	Wed 23	Wagga Wagga	Albury	88	855	
12	Thu 24	Albury	Euroa	81	553	
13	Fri 25	Euroa	Melbourne	44	346	Team Time Trial
				395	4256	
			GRAND TOTAL	1000	12529	
	Sat 26	Melbourne	Melbourne			2 nd Test Lions win 29-26
	Sun 27	Melbourne	Melbourne			Visit Healesville
	Mon 28	Fly Home				

Leaving Sydney we crossed the iconic Sydney Harbour bridge with the Opera House in its shadow before enjoying the seemingly endless undulations of the northern suburbs. A combination of navigating by Komoot (bikes) and Google maps (support vehicle) led to some frustration but progress was maintained. The scenery north of Sydney was spectacular passing kangaroo point and joining the M2/A2 at the Mooney Mooney (meaning 'many kangaroos' in the indigenous language) bridge. We ended the relatively short first day's cycle at Morisset before returning to our accommodation at Wyong (meaning either 'an edible yam' or 'a place of running water'). Day 2 dawned bright and early and saw a longer leg from Wyong to Bulahdelah, skirting the coast but on the relatively forgiving Pacific Highway (in New South Wales, cyclists are encouraged to use the hard shoulder of motorways. Although initially thought provoking, with articulated lorries passing at nearly 70 mph, it is a designated cycle lane).



Ready for the Off – only 1 760 000 yards to go



The joys of puncture repair

Bulahdelah (from the Worimi 'boolah dillah' meaning Great Rock, population 1162), was in 1970 the scene of the most destructive Australian tornado on record. Although small, it is perfectly formed, and could not have been more welcoming to us, notwithstanding the somewhat taciturn bar attendant.

Day 3 saw continued progress along the Pacific Highway passing through Taree until reaching the very picturesque Port Macquarie (named by John Oxley after Lachlan Macquarie, and founded as a penal settlement in 1821 but now renowned for its natural beauty, stunning beaches and wildlife). The next day, after some rapid route adjustment we cycled into Coffs Harbour (originally Gitten Mirreh in Gumbaynggirr, meaning 'big moon', then Korff's harbour in 1847). By this time we had settled into a fairly efficient schedule of alternating who was in front, taking the wind, and pausing for a brief refreshment stop approximately every 15-20 miles. Food was best taken little and often, rather than large meals, and although average temperatures were 20 deg C, we required to drink significant amounts of water. Motorists in general were friendly and supportive and local business owners, particularly cycle shops, very helpful. There was a degree of surprise when people learned what was being attempted (neither of us are built for cycling – combined weight 210 kg combined age 120 years) but no antipathy.

We made a short video every evening (attached to this account) indicating progress and to toast Andy Vaughts, and then set to dinner. Cycling for 6-8 hours per day creates an appetite. We were careful to not only take on board plenty of calories with the evening meal, but to also try to replace lost electrolytes. Beer appeared to be the most pragmatic solution.



Great views in Mclean



Hanging tough on the Gold Coast

Our perambulations continued through Iluka (meaning 'near the sea'), which was visually stunning, and then on to Gold Coast (so named due to over inflated real estate prices) where we were met by Andy Jones a Guy's Hospital graduate from the 1980s, where we enjoyed a long and enjoyable evening. The following day saw us cross the New South Wales-Queensland border to reach Brisbane along a superbly constructed cycle way which took us to the centre of the city. A careless moment saw Charlie make contact with the tarmac but with no permanent damage (not sure how the tarmac fared).



Sunrise at Iluka



Sunset at the Gold Coast



Approaching the end of the First Leg



Room with a (33rd floor) view

A time trial from Flinders to Beer Burrum (perhaps better termed beer barren) was followed by us stowing our bikes in our 33rd floor apartment in order to watch a game of Aussie Rules (fantastic athletes) at the Gabba, and the following day we witnessed the Lions defeat the Wallabies at Suncorp. A long drive back to Sydney saw us meet up with Bernard H-V and Eli LJ, for a superb Korean meal, definitely something to write home about (none of us took up the offer of gizzard aka ventriculus, gastric mill or gigerium, though).



There is actually a dog sitting on a tucker box 5 miles from Gundagai

The Second Leg started with a long drive away from Sydney then a cycle, via Gundagai, to Jugiong, population 255, where we saw the Southern Cross and Milky Way in outstanding clarity, and were divebombed by cockatoos. The following day was over 100 miles of cycling, in persistent rain, with significant amounts of climb. Lots of fun. We continued through the very rural southern New South Wales and saw a tremendous amount of wildlife (and a lot of roadkill unfortunately): kangaroos, wallabies, wombats, possums, foxes and echidna to name a few. The birdlife was fantastic including: parrot, paraquet, cockatoo, kookaburra, rosella, lorikeet, pelican and pitta.

This fauna fest continued on crossing into Victoria and at one stage we had a kangaroo racing (and beating) us at the side of the road. The road surfaces varied from motorway hard shoulder, through gravel, to dirt road. We therefore experienced numerous punctures and a few spoke issues but otherwise were relatively untroubled mechanically. Bernard, man of many, and contrasting, talents, holds the records for both time spent 'tractoring' at the front of the peloton (super long time) and also changing an inner tube (super short time).



Lots of fun



Don't mess with Big Ned

Spending time at Wagga Wagga and Albury was both instructive and enjoyable. On the way to Melbourne we passed through Glenrowan, home to the Ned Kelly museum and his Megalithic statue before reaching Euroa, whose bank was robbed by Ned Kelly in 1878, 35 years after the founding of Guys Hospital Rugby Football Club. Our final stage was a 44.47 mile Time Trial, convincingly won by Team Vaughts, before crossing the finishing line at the McGinty's Lane signpost in deepest Victoria.



Bernard (unusually) getting a free ride



Toasting the end with VB

We then relaxed for a couple of days in Melbourne, saw the Lions defeat the Wallabies in the dying seconds of the 2nd Test and enjoyed a superb visit to the Healesville wildlife sanctuary to see: koala, kangaroos, wombats, Tasmanian devils, echidna, platypus, many possums, dozens of types of bird, including emu, but unfortunately no dingo (probably sleeping).



Koala



Tasmanian Devil

A fantastic 3 weeks in Australia. Helpfulness and friendliness throughout, stunning scenery and wildlife, excellent and varied food (large SE Asian influences now) not least Chicken Parmi, 4 and 20 pies and a number of kebabs. We also sampled several local drinks including: Bundaberg rum and coke, Victoria Bitter (VB), 'Hard rated' lemonade, Carlton, Tooheys, Great Northern and some excellent wines. We were privileged to witness 2 wins for the Lions (they lost the 3rd Test) and a game of the incredibly demanding Aussie Rules.

We met our distance goal and exceeded our financial target, raising over £14,500 (including Gift Aid) for the My Name's Doddie Foundation in direct support of Andy Vaughton. We would like to thank all those who supported and helped us particularly: Paul Terry, Andrew Hocking, Eli LJ, Guys Hospital RFC, Esher RFC, Leo Cusack and Western Region Health. We would also like to thank Vaughts and his family and friends for giving us the inspiration to undertake this very rewarding challenge. Apologies if we have missed anyone out.

Team Vaughts: Charlie Beardmore, Simon Catnach, Bernard Harrington-Vogt, Paul Terry