

Edinburgh cyclist Andrew Dickson completes epic journey across Australia



Exactly two months to the day after leaving Perth on the west coast of Australia, Edinburgh cyclist, Andrew Dickson, finally arrived in Brisbane on the east coast of Queensland earlier today.

As an added bonus, Andrew can now enjoy the hospitality of a former colleague who has been following Andrew's adventure via The Edinburgh Reporter.

To mark this achievement, a formal event is being held at Radio Lollipop at the Mater Care Hospital in Brisbane tomorrow night.

Since The Edinburgh Reporter last encountered Andrew, he has added to his sightings of Australian wildlife, spotting a spiny echidna lying by the side of the road near Beachport, and a giant ant with pinchers snuggled up inside his training shoe. Whilst the echidna didn't mind meeting the friendly Scotsman, the giant ant certainly did, and Andrew was forced to use up much of his 'magic' foot cream, and from now on his shoes spend the night inside the tent. He has also broken down, checked out the Canberra Highland games and dined with the 'twelve tribes community.'

After leaving Port Campbell, Andrew eventually reached Cann River Highway with several steep ups and downs and a last climb, which he politely described as a 'brut'. As it's just as difficult to walk pushing the fully loaded bike, as it is staying on, in the granny gear and pedalling, Andrew just had to get on with it, and when it did flatten out he left

Victoria and entered New South Wales or 'platypus country' according to several notice boards and the road name changed to the Monaro Highway.

Andrew managed to reach Bombala for lunch by the river and then paid a visit to the library. It turned out they had just had Wi-Fi activated and he was the first person to make use of the system, which makes a nice change as, those who know him will testify, he is normally the last person to use a computer.

From there, Andrew reached Canberra, where by chance the Highland Games were taking place, so he decided to pay a visit.



After heading through the city centre for a final look, he then took the Federal Highway (23) north, where disaster struck as his chain broke. Normally that would not be a major issue as he has a chain splitter/link remover and spare emergency links, however for some unknown reason the tool would not remove the link pin. One hour and some unprintable language later, Plan 'B' came into operation. After unsuccessfully thumbing a lift to Goulburn to get a helpful lorry driver, heading in the opposite direction did mention it was nearly all downhill to Tarago, so he decided to freewheel.

At the village he noticed Tarago Auto Repairs and spoke to a young mechanic who got to work with an angle grinder and removed the broken link in about a minute. Five minutes later he had the emergency link fitted and was back on the road with only a few hours lost.

"To all the staff at Tarago Auto Repairs, many, many thanks. You kept the show on the road", said the relieved Scotsman.

The following day, wanting to make up for lost time, Andrew pressed on through Moss Vale, Mittagong, Yerrinbool and

Tahmoor. He was starting to lose daylight at Picton and running out of options to camp, when a pick-up truck stopped and a girl got out. Her name was Anavah and she invited him to stay at the 'Twelve Tribes' community (www.twelvetribes.org) at Pepper Corn Farm Creek which was just ahead. Andrew was introduced to Sameach (Anavah's husband), their children and Nathaniel and all the others at, what he describes as a "super location and even more hospitable and welcoming people".

All the parents and children were down by the creek having their evening meeting/discussion and this was followed by an open air meal which he was cordially invited to join. The singing and camp fire really added to the welcoming atmosphere. The food, all totally organic, was delicious and they wouldn't hear of Andrew not participating. The adults and children were all interacting together in discussions and play, including canoeing in the creek. On the opposite hillside were fields, some with large, plastic covered greenhouses where they grow their own produce. They also have a shop nearby selling a wide range of organically grown produce including fruit, vegetables, breads and cakes.

Whilst Andrew could have pitched my tent, instead he was invited (and accepted) to use the little log cabin beside a smaller creek.



The following day he headed north on the Old Hume Highway, and had a quick stop at Camden for the library and 'tourist information'. He was about to enter Sydney, the biggest city in Australia and needed to be prepared. His plan was to use the Hume Highway from when he past under the M7 Freeway.

On reaching the M7 Andrew spoke to another cyclist and her advice was to use the cycleway which parallels the M7 round to the M2 and cross into Sydney over the Harbour Bridge. That was

ideal, especially when he got the impression it was only about 40 km (under 30 miles), not much more than my planned way in. What do they say about 'sticking to the game plan' or if a route is changed, 'always check the map'. Unfortunately Andrew did neither.

Off he went on a wonderfully wide and clearly marked foot/cycle path. It has a sealed surface and the main route has a central white line. Side paths have 'give way' type lines. It's even has street lighting and although following the M7, is not on it. On he rode and a few hours later saw a Freeway sign indicating Sydney was still 40km ahead. He then did check the map and discovered that the route is probably three times as long as his initial plan. Doh

Andrew then got to the M2 and saw the vehicle gantry indicated just over 30km (less than 20 miles) so that was fine, however turned out the M2 cycleway is closed for roadwork's and there's a temporary re-route in place. First sign indicated Sydney was 48km (well over 30 miles ahead, whilst much of the re-routing is through housing complexes which were very, very hilly, obviously planned by someone who doesn't haul over 30kg of bike and gear. Hour after hour went by and eventually the path returns to M2 cycleway at North Sydney

Andrew decided that it was time for a break, and discovered that McDonald's operate a scheme whereby seniors (over 60's) get a free coffee if another purchase is made. Remembering his roots, Andrew noticed that their cheapest item was an ice-cream at 30 cents (20 pence). So in he went, got his ice-cream and coffee and paid his 30 cents. And free refills apply. Is that not a bargain? If only he had known about this when he started the journey.

Finally, after McDonalds had almost run out of coffee, he cycled the last remaining miles to Harbour Bridge. Andrew takes up the story from there: "It's something to see, despite all the wire grills and netting, presumably to stop litter

etc. and people leaving by other than the prescribed methods. The big downside was the 5 or 6 levels of steps I had to get up to reach the cycle path. Luckily there is a central narrow slope which allows bikes to be pushed up instead of actually being carried. I wasn't popular with all the 'racing roadies' and fast commuters who were heading home at evening rush hour.

"So much for cycling around the city. Weather OK at 6 am but by 7 it was chucking it down, was cool and very windy. Apparently it had been snowing near Canberra, so will be a day spent indoors and no cycling. I started at McDonalds for a 'seniors' coffee and Wi-Fi, then on to the State Library."

His intention is to fly to Japan on Saturday 27 October to visit his son before returning to his Balerno home early November, having raised money for the Craig Gowans' Memorial Fund and Radio Lollipop.

A final 'round up' will appear here in The Edinburgh Reporter when Andrew eventually arrives home in Scotland.

Anyone wishing to contribute can do so at virginmoneygiving.com/bikingacrossaustralia

or wishing to keep up to date with his progress can do so at <http://bikingacrossaustralia.blogspot.co.uk/>