

Ride 558 Report – 21 April 2019

Catch the Runaway Easter Bunny Ride!

Hares: Flaming Janus, Cruelty to Virgins, Jar Jar Binks & Troels Larsen

Our AGM preceded this Ride, and it wrapped up in a reasonable amount of time, according to the GM. Anything over 10 minutes is an utter waste of time, he insists. Perhaps the short duration of this year's AGM was because there were 22 of us present and the more vocal members had buggered off for their own cycling holiday? We shall never know, but one conclusion is that we should strive to build our membership from its current roster of 44. Also noted is that we are an aging group of old farts, with most of us north of 40. Oh well, at least we try to maintain a sense of humour, if not our waistlines.

Today's ride started off well enough, as we departed from Teachers Estate Playground as a pack before entering a maze of nearby fire roads. We meandered around the remains of an old Hainan Village that Ditch was able to identify from some nifty online research that he did afterwards. You can read all about it at this link:

https://remembersingapore.org/2017/01/08/old-upper-thomson-road-kampongs/?fbclid=IwAR0pdmbWP6_jAtWEQ8i64oTuyU8sB6m8IKLMtUgrmDmJmO2QExznR8uOHU

As Singapore loves nature but from a distance, there is a lengthy walking trail being built that consists of wooden posts connected by chain link. This is slated to become the 50-hectare Thomson Nature Park; no doubt there will be a parking lot, restrooms, vending machines and the other trappings of civilization in the not-too-distant future. We cycled through a kilometre or two of this walking trail before encountering a muddy bog that was deceptively deep (my foot sank a foot and a half deep and was encased with mud). We hit a backcheck and from that point we spent 20 minutes in these fire roads, following the Hares until we realized that they didn't know the out point either. Our Sunday morning was becoming like a Mr. Bean comedy, with the pack literally going in circles, until we finally came out to a main road and carried on.

There was plenty of good riding to be had, as the Hares had laid an ambitious 22km route for us. Flaming Janus had even managed to recce the course in the evenings, having to find his way through the bush by torch light. The first third of the Ride had us climbing a lot of elevation and overcoming some occasional technical bits. At one point, we were under the freeway and perched at the top of a 15 foot descent that was both steep and pocked with packed earth protrusions. Cruelty to Virgins and Slippery Nipples both 'manned up' and boldly took the descent. Long Khlong Silver and I whipped out and pushed our bikes down instead. I could almost visualize hitting those earthy bumps on the way down and ending up in a foetal position after a bad fall.

The 22 riders spread out into different 'packs' so that we found ourselves in groups of five or six; our group was accompanied by Cruelty to Virgins and he kept us intact for at least half of the way. The second leg of the Ride saw us building speed, as we blasted our way through the network of flat off-road trails found in between Tagore Lane and Lentor Avenue. We didn't see any boars or monitor lizards, though – they must have heard us coming and hid. We cycled through a network of grassy corridors behind residential addresses, and alongside the canal that we passed en route, Rough Sex noticed a beautiful lotus flower that made her day.

As we cycled towards Home along Yio Chu Kang Road, we were on time to finish right on schedule. But wait, in the distance I could see Suction Cup turning off of the sidewalk. As I proceeded, I could see some chalk and paper indicating us to turn off of the sidewalk and back into the shiggy. As the clock read noon on the dot, I thought something was not right and my suspicions were eventually confirmed. With everyone now spread out, there was no one to consult; the only clear option was to carry on with the trail set by the Hares.

The intermittent paper trail led me to a steep incline. In the first hour of the Ride, I would have ridden up without any questions asked, but the sun was now high and my energy level was sagging. Hills were now for walking, not for riding. Despite the fluid and the salt tablets, I was losing momentum. The paper trail led me into a circuitous jungle path, perhaps 2 or 3 kilometres long, that was marked by striped plastic tape at head level (this would be at waist level for Flaming Janus and Jar Jar Binks). By this time I was pushing my bike along, saying "Why am I here?" as I went from marker to marker. Sometimes I would deviate from the trail, not seeing the next marker, and then have to retrace my steps until I could see the next bit of plastic tied around a tree. At one point, I saw a plastic chair – probably used by the durian pickers when in season – and sat down and rested. Eventually, I came to the welcome sight of a fire road and carried on. As I walked along a bit, I noticed a pair of discarded shoe soles on the ground. They look familiar, I thought, and upon looking again, I saw that I had already seen those soles a half hour before. With no paper to guide me, and nary a soul in sight, I exited through a route that I already knew. This brought me out at Tagore Lane and the TG Building, where I promptly collapsed on the grass for a few minutes. I then dragged myself up and went in search of a cold drink and some aircon. As it was Easter Sunday, one or two places I saw were closed, but thankfully Happy Kampong Seafood was open and I ordered a 100 Plus with ice. The auntie behind the counter, upon seeing how shagged I looked, offered me a 'tablet' that I respectfully declined. After a half hour of recovery spent drinking 100 Plus and putting ice on my head and down my shirt, I resumed my way back to Teachers Estate. The two hour Ride had become a three hour odyssey, and my computer displayed 24km. I was a broken man, but still capable of cycling another 2km back to Home.

Apparently, everyone had a similar story to tell, because when I reached Teachers Estate Playground the Hashers were still driving off and the Circle had been cancelled. With riders coming in by dribs and drabs, and some like Old Worn Stump getting lost, our cohort of 22 had dispersed and I was fortunate to find some faithful few at La Pizzaiola. It was my first time at this atmospheric Italian bistro, I was most impressed by their food and cold beer. This is a great place that I would come to again, if it were not so out of the way.

I have only been 'broken' by two Hashes, the first being a 2017 Mandai Hash (Ride 528) Hared by Wan King and My Precious; and this one. These two local Hashes were on par with anything I've done from Cape to Cape or Tour de Timor, as the hot midday weather depletes energy by the minute. Three hours of cycling at the equator is more demanding than five hours anywhere else.

Regardless, we owe a round of thanks to these devoted Hares, who stepped up and gave us a gruelling but memorable outing along the fire roads and grassy corridors of the Upper Thomson area. Suffice it to say that they broke the Hash this day. They did not get the kudos or Down-Downs they deserved in the Circle, but they put in a monumental effort in ensuring us a well-spent Easter Sunday in Singapore. Let's give the lovely lads a note: *Here's to the Hares, they're true blue, they are bastards through and through, they are piss-pots so they say, tried to go to Heaven but they went the other way. Drink it down, down, down, down, down...*

Until the next ride, on on!

Scribed by: Knobby Boy Scout

