

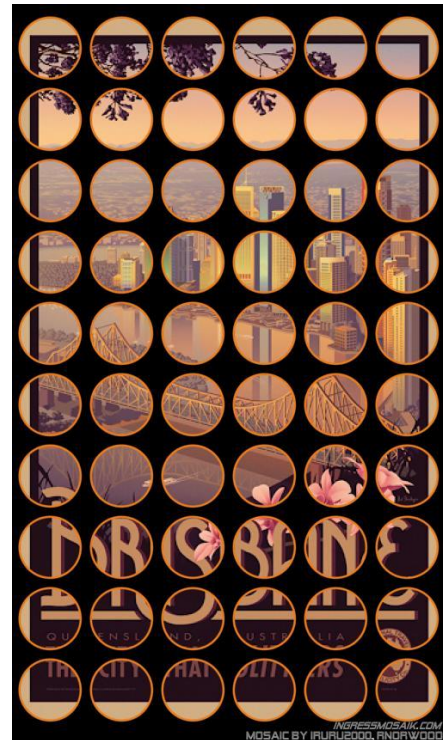
Ride report – Ingress – Historic Brisbane Banner Mission

(a very long treasure hunt)

I wrote a while ago about a Christmas fuelled cycling challenge that a game playing friend of mine and I discussed – and accepted. It's statistics are 214km, 433 locations to visit (ie the treasures) and two people trying to complete the banner on bicycles.

We have spoken to others that have completed the challenge, one told us that it took her and her partner about 15 hours (by car) over three days with several stops on the way through. Another stated 5 hours by car (a bit dubious as you read on).

Ingress is Niantic's effort to get nerds off the couch and walking around. Niantic at the time of creation was owned by Google, and was a big data analytics experiment to develop the tools to analyse where people went. For the players, it is a worldwide game of capture the flag with a few added extras. It does have a social side, like most organized games as well. Pokemon Go and the recently released Harry Potter – Wizards Unite are other byproducts of the game engine (and they use a lot of the same locations too) but I digress.



I altered my flat bar Giant to suit Martin (including flat pedals and a saddle more suited to his liking) I couldn't fit his normal seat to it thankfully. We had looked at a couple of dates – the first being Easter Monday, but I was too chafed after a 300km ride containing a lot of rain. Martin was glad of the delay too as he was a bit anxious about the ride. Eventually, we found the last Saturday of June to be mutually available so planning commenced around that.

I picked Martin up from the Bray Park train station (close to home for me but a convenient train station in case Martin bailed early) at about 5:30am and we headed to the city where I had arranged to park my car at work. Once there, I got my bike out of the back of the car, fitted shoes and my usual riding accessories and then walked to collect the other bike from my store room. Once there, Martin proceeded to fit his new phone holder he acquired on a recent trip to Taiwan to the bars but then noticed the nut for the locking clamp was missing – resulting in a half hour delay whilst we went searching for it between the car and the store room. Maybe Murphy was giving a hint of things to come. We never found the original nut but I did manage to find a spare in the store room. Holder fitted then off we went to the start of the ride near the Roma St fire station. It was daylight so riding conditions were better than we had expected at the start. The route took us through Turbot St, upper Edward and we soon made our way via Paddington, Herston, Albion, Tennerife and all the way back to Kangaroo Point where due to a statue being relocated to the middle of the CBD, we had to ride there and back to Woolongabba to continue adding an additional half hour to the ride time. A quarter of the way found us at Highgate Hill riding up Gloucester St (pretty steep for the unfit) before rounding West End and finally returning to the Gabba where we finally started to shake the inner city and move into the suburbs. It is really a bit of an eye opener riding through new areas, seeing sights that you wouldn't normally see. We as Randonneurs do this often on the open road but

to do it in a built up area for hours on end is very different. You also get to see what type of views (and house prices it must attract) for some residents when you see a view from Seven Hills like this



Seven hills does live up to it's name. Beside one of the houses is a historic path that leads up the hill. Cautionary note – it now is concrete, has moss on it and is very slippery when it has been raining. Fortunately, no slips or falls. We seem to have skipped Morningside but found Hawthorne busy and Balmoral even busier. Once we found a bakery, we sat and contemplated the next section of the ride. Cannon hill through to Murrarie and then to Hemmant. We found ourselves riding the hills mainly on the paths as Martin and I weren't that comfortable riding with no shoulders with the volume of traffic in the area, particularly as we needed to stop often to take action on the phones in the game. When we got to Hemmant, I missed one of the locations and only discovered it once 'over the hill' and had to ride back to claim it. We did a loop into the Wynnum West area then to Lindum train station and the long ride out to the Port of Brisbane. The return journey was about 20km and boring. I had thought that Martin would probably bail once we finished that section of the banner (mission 30) as it lined up (6 to a row) which was required for his event the following weekend where he would start a new banner mission.

Once we started off, we found ourselves moving off Lytton Road onto a relatively new bikeway beside Port Drive and where we could chat very easily as we rode. Our good form and fortune soon came undone as we reached Kite St and the bikeway went straight into the Roadhouse carpark. Just as we were about to cross Kite St we saw the first disappointment of the adventure:



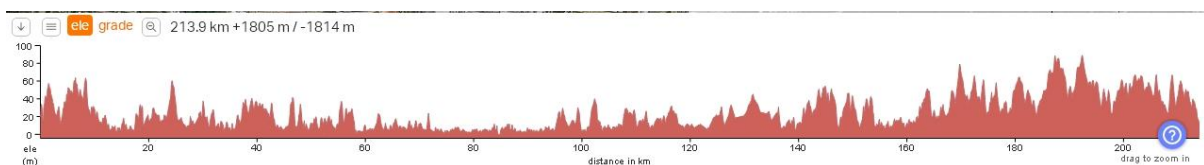
A quick chat to the staff at the roadhouse revealed that beyond the sign is not council territory but belongs to the port authority. Apparently the shoulders are very narrow or non-existent and the prohibition is for safety reasons. Having seen a lot of cyclists in my time, there would be enough that would be giving truck drivers heart attacks on the port roads so I tend to agree with the need. Martin and I had a bite to eat and a terrible coffee while we discussed options – get an uber just to go out to the port? Abandon where we were? In the end, we decided to finish the banner by car. We rode to the nearest train station and caught the train back to the valley, locked my bike away, put the flat bar in the back and then drove out to the POB to continue on. The next six missions were chaotic to say the least – until I got the Wahoo off the bike and started navigating with it. The reason for the Chaos is that the route I planned in RWGPS was the most efficient overall but the game engine sent us either to the first location of the closest and I discovered that Martin was having difficulty with the unfamiliar territory. Some of the area was a little familiar to me from 'Every Which Way' as we travelled through Wynnum, Manly and Lota as we continued through missions 31 to 36 which finished in Wakerley. We finally came unstuck half way through mission 37 which had locations inside the Sleeman Sports Complex which we found to be closed at the end of the day which also ended our outing as we couldn't continue as the missions are in order, to make a picture. Disappointed, we made our way back to Martin's car and decided that finishing this banner was a bad idea and that it was more trouble than it was worth. Once I got back home I abandoned mission 37 as a bad idea. This however was a mistake as I discovered.

During the week, my OCD and a lack of a calendar ride got me thinking that maybe I should just go out and finish it. Martin would be busy with an ingress event on the Saturday and didn't want to finish it anyway, and the banners wouldn't line up if he did anything else so I could ride it as I pleased. I had a look at my travel options and discovered that train line repairs were underway on the Wynnum line so that only left me with the option to park at the finish location (Marooka) then ride the 20km to Gumdale to start day 2. I had a chat to a friend at work who lived and rode in that

area who recommended a slightly different route to Gumdale but couldn't argue with my backroads option but did mention that it would be a bit lumpier.

Day 2 was a little strange as I had no time pressures for the starting time, no time pressure to finish but it felt a lot like an audax particularly as I was riding by myself. My friend was right, the way out to Gumdale was quite lumpy but I took my time particularly as it was raining lightly on and off with the occasional downpour to mix things up.

I made a change to the start of the route electing to go into the Sleeman Sports Complex first then head out to Gumdale – possible because I could go to the locations in a mission in any order. The start of my day seemed a little familiar from my first 11 out of 11 as I to Belmont and soon veered off to go through Camp Hill then Greenslopes. I took advantage of the amenities at Dutton Park and started charging the Wahoo and the phone. For a change, instead of riding down TJ Doyle memorial drive, I took the path down through the park to reach the flood marker at the bottom. My thoughts of a section of reverse river loop was not to be as I soon headed back out to Fairfield Road to make my way past the tennis center, Yerongpilly then over the hill to Holland Park where the hills were alive to the sound of me panting as I rode up them on my way to Mansfield. More rain greeted me as I wound my way first onto Mt Gravatt-Capalaba road, then Mt Cotton Rd to do a loop through Rochedale, vaguely reminiscent of 'What's the Point?' and returning back to Mackenzie. The late stages of the day took me through Upper Mt Gravatt, then Mt Gravatt where I elected to forgo a climb to the lookout (due to the weather of course) and finally found myself looking westward at the top of the last climb at the corner of Toohey and Weller Rd. The final part of the ride was pretty quick, had little incline and left me feeling quite satisfied with my efforts. Day 2 was significantly more tiring than day 1. Perhaps due to the cold and miserable weather or maybe it was because it was lumpier. Overall day 1 had 1000m of climbing, day 2 had 1400m.



The ride profile says it all.... Would I ride this one again? No. Would I recommend it to anyone – yes – but with the caveats around the restricted areas and opening times with a recommendation to tackle it over two different days *and* when the trains aren't replaced by buses.

What I did find really neat is the ability to have a chat to people as I rode slowly with them or behind them on narrow footpaths. I even had one motorist pull over and thank me for wearing such a bright jersey – he said he could see me a long way away – I was wearing my FNQ six pack jersey that day – Thanks Gayle and team for that one! I did spend a huge amount of time on the footpaths as I needed to be able to stop almost without notice – not something to do on a road with cars about.

How did the ride measure up to the description? The suburb names and descriptions did but only a fraction of the locations had any relevance to Brisbane itself. The game engine crashed about every 10km without notice and I had to backtrack a few times because I missed locations whilst it was locked up (not so easily done in a pair)

Martin likes the idea of riding missions on bikes, so he has proposed our next one – called parks of tomorrow. It is a lot more compact but I do believe there will be a bit of walking (Boondall wetlands track) *and* the locations have to be accessed in a specific order *and* the author of the series didn't set them in an efficient order (I suspect he set it up for car drivers who would need to park and walk, and does double loops as there is a 5 minute timer).