

1988 - The First 50k

In the first two years of the Karapoti Classic Paul Kennett was frustrated in his search for a course that was suitably “off road”.

The original 1986 course, from the Akatarawa Summit down through farm land and pine blocks to the Rock Garden, had been fun but not tough enough.

In 1987 he tried a course from MacKay’s Crossing on the Kapiti Coast over to Karapoti Park and while he won his own race, Paul only narrowly beat someone on a road bike and the total distance had been only some 30k.

So before the 1988 event he and brother Jonathan set off into the Akatarawa’s in opposite directions hoping to find each other somewhere in the middle and thus discover a suitably challenging loop that they could start and finish at Karapoti Park. What they found was the “Classic” we now call Karapoti.

But as the following report by Paul in the Wellington Cycling & Touring Club newsletter reveals, mountain biking was still a very underground undertaking.



1988 - The first Le Mans start across the Akatarawa River

The Karapoti Classic was a race I organised with Living Simply. It started and finished at Karapoti Park in the Akatarawa’s.

The course followed Karapoti Gorge to the road-end clearing, turned north towards Cloustonville, then on past Deadwood.

After a sharp left turn, down a very rough ‘track’, it went up the Devil’s Staircase. From that carry-the-bike hill climb came the smooth and fast downhill to “John’s Corner”, then more downhill to the base of Dopers Creek hill.

On the other side of which connects with Karapoti Gorge which leads back to the start/finish line.

As this was a pretty ‘gung ho’ course, there was also a fun ride of 16km up and back Karapoti Gorge.

Forty eight people jumped into the Karapoti River at 10am and by 4pm all 48 had returned with no major injuries, just a few scratches and grazes.

Dean Rainbow had to ‘true’ his rear wheel which had ‘folded’ - good thing he’s a bike mechanic.

Sheila managed to crack the shell of her Bell helmet by walking into a tree!

Simon took only 2hrs 55min to win the 55-plus kilometres. Alison Mitchell from Christchurch finished in 3hrs 54min.

WCTC members made a good impression on the placings list, as you can see below.

John West, and other club members filled vital jobs as marshals around the course, thank you very much.