

A new Ride Organiser's experience – John McMullan.

Mid last year I sat in on the Calendar Committee's meeting at Brian's place to learn a bit about the way the rides are organized for the Calendar. There were several ride organizers present to discuss the proposed calendar that Peter Jenkins had put together and determine if there were any other rides that could be brought in to fill up the year. I had assisted Brian already with Franks Ride by this time as he was sick. Brian was still the RO, I just kicked off the ride and Vaughan and I completed Franks Ride (110 and 200 respectively) and got the brevets to Brian for completion.

Typical discussions revolved around some high temperatures last summer where some of the rides had high drop-out numbers. Kudos to those that finished the rides as it was very hot.

Eventually, we got around to discussing ROs for the couple of rides that were unrepresented and at first I thought about being the RO for the 300 on December 30th as it was a preparation ride for other rides in January, then we discussed the option of no ride between Christmas and New Year, and directing riders to a permanent. I had initially declined the RO role for the ride but a few days later I emailed PJ and Brian putting my hand up for the task, knowing that Brian (who would normally RO the ride) would be overseas at the time.

In November, Brian was called overseas unexpectedly and asked if some-one could undertake the RO duties on the day for Peachy Mee – I put my hand up as I was close by and could pick up bits on my way home and I intended to ride on the day as well. Because no-one was home to check off the riders at completion, I had asked riders to let me know by text that they had finished so we could account for everyone. This almost worked (a misplaced phone, one forgot and the last replied to an email).

I had expected a bit of phone traffic as riders completed but I didn't need to action anything, just tick names off the list. As I was riding as well, I had an expected ride time of about 12 hours but needed a couple of extra breaks due to the warm temperatures and the impending gloom and rain (coke, icy poles and hi-vis) and left Sandgate just as the rain started. The traffic was light but 4km from Brian's I got my first message (how far away are you) and then shortly after 'we are hiding under the bridge because of the storm' – which I had only caught a bit of rain. I had several messages from the group under the bridge letting me know what they were up to and a final late message telling me that they had finished.

As the original ride started at Brian's, we moved the start to my place and Brian modified the RidewithGPS route (which miraculously stayed almost the same distance). I dropped into Brian's place for some training on the Route generation, RORTs (ride organizers report) and website bits for creating the ride details in the calendar. I listened, took notes and we added an extra control at Gales (as the first control was previously at the 110km mark). We did discuss the controls at Kilcoy and closing times so I committed to finding out the relevant shop closing times along the way. Brian and I discussed if I would ride the course on the day but as I don't handle heat particularly well and it would have been my first 300 I declined. I left full of confidence ready for the task.

Several days before the ride I saw the first registrations come in, followed Brian's instructions almost to the letter and created the cue sheets, map and the first two brevets in preparation. A few days later and more registrations (a total of 4 now) and then the first two cancelled. I prepped the new Brevets, glad I could use the pre-prepared cue sheets and maps and prepared to survey the route.

I loaded up the Wahoo with the route and took off on the motorcycle wanting to examine the modification for the first control and after turning onto Brisbane Rd I discovered I had loaded the route without the first control. Just like the Nanny McPhee movie – Lesson number 1 learned.

I prepped an email to the registered riders, discovered a final registration and prepped the final brevet (RORT version 4) and sent the pre-ride email with the tcx, cue sheet and some info from my reconnaissance ride and waited for the day.

I was up early, Tim and Nik arrived at the required time, Scott arrived at just after six (he caught the train to Strathpine) and I gave the ride briefing highlighting the mods to the route, the couple of merges to watch for and the annoying pothole right where you want to ride. The day was predicted to be hot so I let the riders know where water was available and the gaps between. I also asked that they let me know when they were leaving the last control so I could be home when they arrived.

I watched them ride off and proceeded to make some breakfast. Soon after I discovered that the RO gets a few messages through the day. First puncture, other riders well in front and continuing on (making good time). An hour and a half later, second puncture, a few hours later – the third and an indication that he would withdraw. I looked up the train timetable for the nearest station and forwarded the details to Scott and then let the other riders know of the withdrawal so they wouldn't wait.

I got my first 'leaving the last control' message sooner than I expected and kept an eye out the window for Nik to arrive. I only noticed that he had because the dog was barking at something – Nik had been relaxing for a little bit before I saw him. Cold drinks in hand I went and had a chat while we waited for Tim to arrive and discussed any items of interest from the ride such as turns in close proximity a GPS track that wanted riders to ride over a bank and an issue where the last control didn't appear on the Brevet but was on the cue sheet. Tim confirmed this issue (over another cold drink) once he arrived. The good thing was they both got the time and signature for the control in the sequence on the brevet.

I recalled Brian saying something about not copying and pasting (as does the notes in the RORT spreadsheet) but like a noob I forgot. Just like in Nanny McPhee – Lesson number 2 learned. I hand wrote the correct control and finish details on the cards and after more chat bid the riders farewell.

The remainder of the process was quite simple – complete the bits in the brevets and RORT with completion details, DNS and DNF, some words about the day, then copy everything and mail of to the Brevet Secretary.

Some observations - I don't know how Brian manages to ride or for other RO's when a large contingent is out on the road sending messages all the time. Secondly, other RO's will give assistance if needed (thanks PJ).

For others that want to see the other side of the rides hopefully this is a glimpse – other RO's can talk about supported rides but for an extra challenge, put your hand up to be an RO. No real reward other than helping to support our Audax riding community.