

## 16 January 2016 Mulgowie Moose 200km Audax Ride Report

With a standard cycling diet of River Loops, a longer Sunday pedal, and the occasional Sanctuary Cove and back ride, there was an element of nervous energy preparing for my second Audax event. Some of the deeper concerns were allayed, at least in part, by having completed 200km+ in the 2015 Around the Bay in a Day and the fact that the Mulgowie Moose route was comparatively flat.

Nevertheless, having decided to go up a level from the 1 January 'Eleven out of 11' 100kms, the Audax aura and being a novice in that environment did contribute a bit of fussing about in the lead up. This peaked in the couple of days before the 16<sup>th</sup> and ran all the way to forgetting to turn Strava on at the start.

The Gatton weather forecast was checked regularly and an inordinate number of hours were spent researching, acquiring, and commissioning (partly) a replacement for my Cateye bike computer that died early in the week.

In the end, the forecast was something like 60% chance of showers, 17C-25C, wind 25-40km/h; a far cry from the energy sapping heat that might normally be expected in the mid-January world in which the Mulgowie Moose likes to assert its authority. As for the rain and wind, as a cycling buddy of mine likes to say, there's no such thing as bad weather, just bad clothing.

As for the new computer, not having the GPS tracking sorted out on time was not going to be too much of an issue as I had the hard copy route notes, didn't I? More on that later!

Arriving at Lowood Rail Park, Main Street, Lowood, at the duly appointed time of 0600 for the 0630 start, it was somewhat comforting to run straight into the Pethely/Stringer combo as I have ridden regularly with Glenn and his wife Cindy over the last couple of years. I say 'somewhat' and use 'with' loosely regarding Glenn as it's just until he's clipped in. And Cindy's new best cycling friends, including Anne L, have taken her riding to a whole new level!

I had also met Peter W on 1 January and recall clearly him pedalling that red folding bike up the Gateway Bridge at ~25kph! And now at Lowood, his Lucky Star 'I've been everywhere' jersey was as hard to miss as Kym R's PAP and Pat's PBP (I'm learning the TLAs) jerseys were indicative of more than impressive cycling feats.

After lighting requirement inspections by Mark and ride registration completion by Anne J, riders lined up for a group pic before Anne L did her RO (is that a TLA thing too?), including

giving the day's weather forecast of 80% chance of showers...to the wry amusement of the other 18 of us standing in increasing drizzle.

As the group took off at 0630, the usual burst of initial enthusiasm eventually settled down with James (BikeSavvy – is that worth a 10% discount on a service, James?) upfront once his legs warmed up again after the 65km ride out from Tennyson. Strong stuff!

Around 30kms into the ride, the small group of three I was in became four when Mark joined in after rendering assistance at an early bike problem. Sidling up to me, he noted what a good first-timer report Glenn had written for the last newsletter (I agreed enthusiastically of course, Glenn!). This was shortly followed by Mark subtly eliciting an undertaking from me to do one on the current ride. (And Cindy, despite your next Audax being your fourth, prepare to draft as Mark has you in his sights!)

As it turned out, the worst of the day's rain was in the first 50km (and a little afterwards) and, as we rode into the control point at The Floating Café, the anticipation of the hot coffee from the café Anne J promised at the start was palpable. Sadly, for a number of us, it didn't quite work out that way. A café care factor of zero meant a number of us left without the anticipated caffeine hit. However, the delights Anne J and Col had on offer – including Anne's famous low GI, never fail fruit cake – more than made up for it.

As the prospect of coffee dwindled and riders started taking off, I found myself standing around among the heavy hitters and decided to head off. (I was delighted to hear later that my abandoned large flat white had gone to a good cause – Col!)

While heading out the 8km to eventually round the Ma Ma Creek Store and make the Mulgowie Moose's tail (you have to admire the touches of artistry in this ride map), I now had to move into hard copy route sheet navigation mode. Rainy and windy conditions made my status as a novice at riding while navigating while holding onto the zip-lock enclosed directions pretty obvious. This was exemplified by having to stop and pick the instructions up twice before establishing some sort of standard operating procedure to keep me pedalling in the right direction. Talk about on the job training! The associated slight sense of humour failure led to a mental memo to self: Self, get the GPS working!

The potential benefits of compliance with said memo were further exemplified shortly afterwards when missing a turn added to the journey. However, it's an ill wind and all that. Shortly after re-joining the route I came across Dino on his single speed, doing it a bit tough up one of the steeper hills – 'Bit out of condition', he said. While with Dino, two other riders arrived and, after ensuring Dino was okay, I headed off with them, more or less together and in something more or less approaching companionable silence.

In actual fact, I was comfortable with this on two levels: firstly, I enjoy pedalling more or less with my own thoughts (the occasional observation of something significant or safe riding call being acceptable interruptions); and, secondly, it quickly became apparent I was now in GPS guided company and less reliant on my slightly soggy paper directions, some of which were slightly confusing (I'm informed even Anne L had to backtrack twice!). This only supported my early observation from 1 January's ride that the dark art of obfuscation seemed to play some part in Audax route instructions.

And so, at the 120km mark, the loosely cobbled three of us rode into Mulgowie, such as it is, dismounting to the much appreciated lunch stop welcome of Anne and Col. The three of us did what 15 others had already done and tucked into the very welcome rolls and sandwiches Anne was making, as well as more of the delicious cake, snakes, chips etc we'd had 70km ago at The Floating Café non-coffee stop.

For those doing the maths, just as we were leaving Dino arrived, looking very keen to avail himself of the all the replenishments on offer...perhaps even in need. I could only admire the fortitude shown in taking on a 200km ride on a single speed.

After thanking Anne and Col, the three of us continued on our companionably silent way, stopping briefly in Laidley so Pat could buy more batteries for his GPS ('hear hear' I thought, grateful for the belt and braces of both Pat and Peter J having fully operational units).

This also seemed like a good time to actually introduce myself, and so I met Pat and Peter, and, that completed and being able to put names to my ride buddies - maybe that's going a little far just yet - some 50km after hooking up, we rode on towards the final control point at Atkinson Dam some 40km away and 175km out.

Sandy's warm greeting welcomed us at the dam and there was an obvious familiar comfort in the chat. By now I had become accustomed to joining dots, if not now then later, and Roger and Kym R joining the afternoon tea provided further dot material. Through all this, Sandy was replenishing the home baked and other goodies, including beautiful fresh fruit, and making tea and coffee as required.

As we headed off following fond farewells, and given we'd had 95km of riding, a lunch and an afternoon tea more or less together, I decided I needed to join some of the ever increasing supply of dots. Riding up beside Pat, I tentatively started a conversation and we chatted companionably for some of the final 25km about everything from who's who in the Audax zoo to riding motorbikes at breakneck speeds on country roads (Pat, not me!). Many dots were joined.

However, there was certainly no chat as we began the assault on the final Prospect Street climb into downtown Lowood...just what every basically recreational rider wants at the 200km mark!

That accomplished, the cruise down Main Street to the closing control point where we began the day was enjoyable. And it was great to hear that all riders had made it safely back and all Brevet cards were satisfactorily completed.

So some BIG thanks:

- Anne L for her organisation – great ride on nice quiet roads to a memorable route outline
- Anne J for control duties and morning tea and lunch, ably assisted by Col
- Sandy for afternoon tea and control duties
- And last but not least, Pat and Peter J for the company on the road; it wasn't *just* about your GPS

Three days on, my mental note during the ride, when it was raining and windy, not to go beyond 200km is softenin. A group of long distance cycling good people will do that you know.

Craig Estwick  
19 January 2016