

WA Audax 300km 23 March 1996

Checkpoint Autumn 1996 contains an article by Don Briggs entitled 'News From Way Out West'. It includes this item about a 300km loop down to Yarloop.

On our regular Training ride Amanda Annells and Mark Nilan told everyone that they were going to do a day-time 300km ride on the permanent route. Ten people showed interest but the number was reduced to nine, when Terry Redican had to withdraw because of thrombosis in one of his legs. Could have been the cramps problem on the last 200km ride.

We met at the home of Mark and Sue Nilan at 5.30am on a very cold Saturday morning; long lycra and rain jacket temperatures. Some of us marvelled at the comet still visible in the northern sky while others prepared their bikes. Barbara Farmer restarted her cycling career with husband Colin, Brian Hughes, Steve Blackbourn, John Lee, new rider Alan Tolcher, Mark Nilan, Amanda Annells and yours truly. I had planned the route and tried to keep away from some of the more busy roads which unfortunately meant we had a distance of somewhere around 310kms.

This distance proved to be our downfall later on. Alan had a puncture after about half an hour and while some walked off down the road others of us helped with suggestions and actually changing the tube. As we all joined up together again the wind was becoming stronger into our faces from the south east. A peloton was quickly arranged and with nine riders we managed to set up a reasonable pace.

Our first stop was Mandurah at the 24 hour Service Station over the Murray River Bridge. Potato pies and chips were the order for the day and when everyone had eaten we set off for Pinjarra to the east. Through the dairy land area south of Pinjarra, which is very dry this time of the year, we managed to dodge some large truck on the back roads but thankfully survived to reach the next control at Yarloop.

Yarloop¹ is a timber town on the South West Highway and we lunched again on pies; meat and apple before enjoying a tail-wind ride to Preston Beach.

Misfortune struck Amanda when a spoke snapped in her rear wheel. Fortunately we were able to loosen off the other side to square it up again but it was left in a slight egg shape. Colin was next but his problem was more severe. Nearly all of his rear wheel spokes had become loose. He had to stop a couple of times on the way home to double check that his quick repair was still operating.

After Mandurah again we headed off onto the last leg of the journey. Fairly uneventful was the return trip until we reached a turn-off which would have added another 10kms onto an already over the 310kms planned distance. Colin our Regional Correspondent and myself as the Ride Coordinator bowed to the mob rule and decided to go on a yet uncharted route but shorter. A gravel road jumped out of the darkness and Barbara fell with Brian Hughes tumbling over the top. Both suffered some abrasions and Brian a sore neck.

We eventually went back to the finish via a busier road where Sue was waiting with a hot coffee. This ride has let more people into the Super Randonneur 1996 area and each wanted to do the ride to get some distance into their legs for the post Easter 400km event on the 13th of April.

Note: A lightning strike sparked a fire east of Waroona in January 2016. Many readers will remember that the historic town of Yarloop, 120km south of Perth, was all but destroyed. Fortunately, the community has been able to slowly re-build.