

200KM RANDONEE 12th MARCH 1989 PERTH WESTERN AUSTRALIA

MY FIRST AUDAX

Training began a few weeks beforehand with a casual 200km from John Martin's place at Pickering Brook to Toodyay and return. There are several ways to get to Toodyay from Pickering Brook. Having not travelled along the "regular" route my bike and I got a shock as we set off through Mundaring and the climbs. You may think, why isn't he talking about the 200 proper? Well I'm getting to that. After a day of exploring every grain of sand on the road between Pickering Brook and Toodyay I questioned the thought of Audax rides being fun. It took a great deal of thought and determination to decide to enter the 200km, constantly reminding myself of the torrid time I had had earlier.

I turned up at Kelmscott Railway Station, 12 March at 6.30am wondering why this insanity and amateur masochism had overtaken me. Yet with a feeling of as time to leave drew closer. The organizer (and sadist) Peter Steer checked my machine to ensure everything worked, gave me an evil grin and said "well, your first Audax. Hope you're feeling fit". Those words crumbled any confidence I might have had! Fit! My legs were like jelly. I couldn't have pushed a feather. I waited and as others arrived, seemingly oblivious to the impending pain. Didn't they know how it would hurt?

We set off just after 7am into a 20-25 knot gale. The first 500m were easy. The next 199.5km were gruelling. After the obvious jostle at the start, the group soon settled into a group of riders following Rod Evans, who, drafting close to 30 riders, must, have felt like he was towing an 8ton truck. This disturbing demi-god like adulation continued for most of the afternoon.

After a head wind trip all the way to Pinjarra, I was only too pleased to see the first checkpoint. Anne and John Waters, along with family, provided an oasis in what seemed like a punishment for murder. Speaking of murder, Peter Steer cruised up like he'd just swallowed a truck load of steroids, and with that evil grin intact, said "How's it going?!!" I won't mention the language that followed but suffice to say, Peter wasn't top of the hit parade at this stage. We set off again to complete a loop designed to add the necessary mileage to complete the 200km. What it achieved was to convince me I wasn't going to die after all. I actually started to enjoy the scenery. Then I discovered what had kept Rod, John, Kleber, Paul, Peter and the rest going. Take your mind off the job! The loop through Coolup proved to be rewarding, particularly the run back to Pinjarra, I got back to Pinjarra feeling a million dollars!

I was rewarded with more of the same on the run to Mandurah where my mentors, Rod Evans and Kleber Claux showed you can still get a headwind even with a 25 knot gale at your back. Just as I felt my legs complaining we reached the Roadhouse. I observed Sheik "John" Walters and his oasis in action again at the Mandurah Roadhouse. Oh, how I received the support crew when the day was done! I watched the other members arrive, Mike Waters. Sue and Barry, Karl, Colin Farmer, John Martin to mention but a few. Their faces reflected an optimum I didn't feel. But the moment now broken with a ravenous cry from Rod Evans, who with all the charm of a professional hawker started flogging Audax shirts. He had towed us all to Pinjarra all the while carrying a good supply of Audax fashion creations! I felt humbled in his presence.

After a moderately lengthy time had passed someone (I suspect Peter Steer!) readily suggested we set off again. So we did. The wind had died considerably. Just as well! The distance was starting to tell. The group broke up on the road to Rockingham into smaller groups. I was in with Kleber, Rod, Carl and 3 or 4 others. We headed towards Forrest Road

and lo and behold a secret control. After a short time we set off again. From this point on, I was separated from any major group and rode with Karl a Belgian chap who doesn't sweat. The return roads grew longer and longer, and it seemed we were never going to arrive back at the start point. But finally, Karl and I wearily (more me than him) rode into the Railway Station car-park. What an achievement! I felt like I'd won an Olympic Gold Medal. But my legs betrayed me. Soon after sitting down, I found I had absolutely no urge to getup! I have mentioned but a few of the riders who'd participated that day, but my thanks go to all for their help. Also the support crew, John and Anne Waters and family. I have not and will never forget their help and encouragement throughout the day. Finally, the organiser or head of the Spanish Inquisition here in WA Peter Steer. He certainly picked out a good ride and his constant guidance and advice was invaluable. I have written this as a personal story, it certainly felt like it on the day, but I'm sure most of the riders would have seen it each in their own different ways. I must personally thank Rod Evans, Kleber Claux, John Meakin, Peter Steer and John Martin for their help and the time preceding the Audax. Their "training" rides certainly softened the shock of the day. I look forward to everyone's company on the 300km. Congratulations to everyone! Tim Farmer