

**300 km Achievement Ride - 600 km Randonee**

The 5.00 am Start

12 October 1985

Hopes of a pleasant early start were dashed when through the night the easterly wind howled, lightning flashed, thunder roared and rain came down. It was cold too! However at Perth G.P.O. 14 cyclists gathered, all cheerful and ready to leave at 5.00 am. Those participating in the 300 km ride were: Ray Penman, Stephen Penman, Paul Kittler, Jane Slack-Smith, Stewart Stockdale, Iain Smith and Paul Talbot. Those for the 600 km Randonee were: John Martin, Neil Porteous, Merv Girdlestone, Ron Masterman, David Doust, Bert Van der Moosdyke and Roger Buckner.

We started in a hurry and after 5 km there were cries from the back to slow down. It was good to leave Perth and Fremantle behind, turn the lights off and get onto the open roads. Our first stop was Mandurah where we met the bus, Wendy and her support car and Peter Cooksey who was on his way to work. We then tackled the easterly to Pinjarra which wasn't as bad as expected. The Deli was raided in Pinjarra before setting off down the South-West Highway to Harvey. Grandad was sighted during this stretch eating from a bucket of chips for many kilometers. At Harvey, Merv made some repairs to his back wheel which had buckled and was binding on his brakes. This had slowed him down to our pace. The next stop was Dardanup; at long last we had left the South-West Highway. What a relief from the traffic.

About 200 km had now been covered and most seemed to be feeling the effects a little. It was here that the group split up, starting off in twos and threes. John, who being organiser had a lot on his plate seeing to everyone else all the time, had vanished looking for water. Merv, Bert and I waited for him and that was the last we saw of most of the others. We caught up with Neil and Roger who were suffering in the hills. John offered to stay with them while Merv, Bert and I went on to wait at Lowden. When they arrived, Wendy was not far behind in the car. Roger decided to retire and go in the car; Neil just wanted a good rest and insisted that we go on and he would follow alone. Wendy said she would keep an eye on him. So off we set to the next stop, Kirup, at 262 km. As we arrived at Kirup, Alan Booth and Geoff Dwyer were just leaving. Wendy arrived having left Roger at Donnybrook. She reported that Neil was close to Stephen Booth; they teamed up later.

By now we were well down on our schedule hoping to get to Bridgetown before dark, but still well ahead of our Audax time. The wind was still blowing strongly in our faces and it was cold with intermittent rain as we put our lights on and tackled the hills ahead. Some don't notice the hills do they John? - but I do. Bert didn't have low gears like the rest of us so he kept taking off at the front out of the saddle. He rode very well, completing the 600 km without a grumble. Up one hill in the dark we acquired another rider. It was David and I don't know where he

came from.

It had gone 8 pm when we arrived at Bridgetown. We went up to the Y.H. and met the others but didn't even stay for anything to eat before setting off in the cold, dark and wet for Donnybrook.

Seven of us had set off originally for the 600 km Ride. Roger having retired and with Neil still on the road we were now five, John, Merv, David, Bert and myself. It was a pitch black night and as we climbed the hill out of Bridgetown, two cycle lights came towards us. It was Neil and Stephen. Neil said he would be following later.

The ride to Donnybrook was the toughest part of the trip. Not only was it dark, wet and cold but climbing the hills at snail's pace provided very little light from the generators. And then, when we were out of the saddle the rear wheel would slip and the light would go out. Car headlights were a problem but we were lucky there were not too many pot-holes and other obstructions on the road, otherwise it could have been really dangerous. Railway crossings were also a problem. Slowing down to go over them meant that the lights just about went out and you didn't know where the crossing actually was until you hit it - and they are all angled crossings, not square.

We finally got to Donnybrook about 11.30 pm. Merv's wheel was buckled again and mine was going the same way. We took the bikes into the Motel rooms and did the necessary repairs, cleaned up and prepared for the morning, finally getting to bed about 1.30 am. Up at 4.00 am, breakfast at 5.00 am then off again.

Neil had arrived at 2.00 am. He had had a crash on the way but was not badly hurt. In the event he decided to call it a day and later joined the bus with Roger.

The run back was better than expected. It seemed a bit hilly to me from Lowden to Dardanup, but when we got on the South-West Highway the wind was in our favour. We intended to go straight through Pinjarra but we noticed the bus and so stopped for a talk. Meanwhile, Peter Cooksey who lives in Mandurah had come out to meet us, missed us and headed down the South-West Highway. He had a 6-hour ride in vain. Sorry Peter!

As we headed up towards Rockingham, everyone had a complaint - saddle, feet, backache, neck-ache, arms and hands, but as we went through Fremantle they all seemed to vanish as we were now close to home. At least I presume they vanished as there were no more complaints. It was a wonderful feeling cycling down Wellington Street to the G.P.O. In the car park, surprise, we had a welcoming committee. Thanks.

The weekend was a great success thanks to all the helpers and organizers. From the 600 group, special thanks to John Martin and Wendy. It looks as though now we have established Audax riding in W.A. there is a lot of work to be done. But 1986 should be a good year.

Ron Masterman

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