

1000 KM AUDAX RANDONEE Sept. 1989

BY: DAVID MIDOLO

RIDERS: Jim Benford, Peter Bombardieri, Rod Evans, Colin Farmer, Phil Giddins, Lin Hambleton, Brian Hawes, John Martin and David Midolo.

Thursday 14th September

Riders and support crew begin gathering in the evening at the old York Lodge, some 97km east of Perth, in preparation for the 1000km Audax. The course was designed to provide a choice of 400km, 200km, 300km and 600km events in a series of loops centred on York. Other riders will join our group on the Saturday to ride a 300km course. Rod Evans, not feeling up to the strain of a 1000km event after his recent record breaking circumnavigation of Australia, decided to do the 400km course followed by the 600km event (maybe it sounds easier if you say it quickly). It is sad to learn that Kleber Claux and Peter Steer will not be able to ride with us due to injury, having been amongst the strongest riders in the previous events this year.

Friday 15th September

We start at 6.00am the morning is crisp and clear, with Jim and Brian leading the pack to our first control at Pingelley (85km South of York). Shane Ritchie and Peter Steer are support crew and do a fine job. The billy is boiling and they offer hot drinks and cheerful comments as we tuck into our food. John Martin, who is still getting over a bad case of flu from earlier in the week, is not his usual sparkling self. I am a little apprehensive of the distance, not having gone over 600km before. I think some of the other riders share these thoughts.

We return to Brookton for lunch and have covered over 200km by the time we are able to enjoy the luxury of a sit down break in the comfortable surrounds of the Old York Lodge.

Jim is still going strong at the front of the pack as we head north to Toodyay into a cross wind. The group splits into two going across the hilly section over the last 30km to Toodyay, I am amongst the slower riders. The evening is calm and riding conditions very pleasant. Darkness comes just before Toodyay. Rod, Brian, Jim and Phil are away shortly after the rest of us arrive at the Toodyay control. I am spoiled by my wife, Susan, and her sister Janine, who have driven out from Perth to meet me. There is some cloud cover which masks the full moon and the evening is quite warm as we ride the 48km section to Goomalling.

We ride south for the last 93km stage from Goomalling to York and are glad to come across a Secret Control half way along where we stock up on food and a hot drink. The last section into York is completed in bright moon light. Peter is feeling the strain of the days ride

and is out of food as we finish just after 2.00am. Lin Hambleton sets a record for being the quickest cyclist to get into bed (about two minutes). I settled for a long hot shower and some hot food, eaten in front of a gas heaters before taking a well-earned sleep.

Saturday 16th September

I awake to be informed that Jim Benford, who rode so strongly yesterday, had a fall late in the evening and has had to pull out because he injured his knee.

For me there is just time for a plate of porridge before we are on our way at 8.00am. We are joined by the riders doing the 300km course, Bill Clues, Brett Rutherford, Rob Hillary and Rene and Paul Smeets (a father and son combination).

Today we are to do the big loop, east to Quairading, south to Corrigin, west to Brookton and then back north to York. The fresh riders lead off in perfect conditions, bright sunshine before the pack splits into two. I am in the rear group intent to nurse along tired legs.

We go through Quairading to the first control, where our support crew of Merv Girdlestone, his wife Margaret and Ron Masterman are waiting with soup and hot drinks. It is all very civilised with a table and chairs, except for carnivorous mosquitoes which interrupt proceedings. The first riders leave the control almost as we get in.

I find the undulating section to Corrigin difficult. We meet the leading riders, including Rod and Brian, coming up the hill out of Corrigin as we ride in. Reaching the Aldersyde control at dusk, we were assaulted by mosquitoes yet again.

It is a relatively short ride into Brookton where we stop at Stumpy's Garage for some hot food. With clear skies, the night is cooling fast as we set off to York. Half way along there is a secret control at Beverley. I find the cold intense and I put on every bit of clothing I can lay my hands on. The leading riders are well in front. We take off from Beverley in dribs and drabs depending on whether the luring comforts of hot showers, food and a warm bed have more influence than the tiring body. John Martin sets off at a brisk pace and drags others along in his wake. I am still content to settle at the rear of the field. Lin's lights pack up as his generator jams, however there is little concern as we ride in bright moonlight. I finish just after midnight but still find time for a hot shower and food before bed.

Congratulations to Brett, Rene, Paul, Rob and Bill on successfully completing the 300km ride.

Sunday 17th September

John Martin makes possibly the toughest and most courageous decision of his distinguished Audax career

and withdraws after two days of pushing his body, weakened by a bad dose of the flu, to the limit.

We started just after 8.00am in fine weather. The seven remaining riders are joined by Sue and Barry Jones, who will accompany us for the first leg to Meckering. We split into two groups almost immediately with Brian, Rod and Phil in the lead group and Colin, Lin, Peter and myself in the second group.

The breeze strengthens as we ride and we encounter quite a severe headwind over the last few kilometres into Meckering. Shane Ritchie and John Martin are the official support crew, with Susan and Janine adding cheer at the Meckering control.

We organise our group to ride single file, each rider taking a brief turn at the front, as we battle our way to Dowerin against the stiff cross wind. We take a welcomed break half way along. Just as we start off again the rain comes down, almost out of the blue as it was sunny at the Meckering control. Perhaps the quote of the ride comes from Lin Hambelton (dry humour in wet rain?) "We have all left our raincoats behind. But that's okay, because it's a stupid thing to do and we are stupid to be out here".

We enter Dowerin, a somewhat bedraggled bunch, and shelter under a shopfront as we eat lunch. Peter Steer arrives to assist John and Shane as support crew.

Luckily the rain stops as we set out, although there is still a cross wind. Turning south at Goomalling we are with the wind at last. The light gradually fades into night and eventually the lights of Meckering come into view. Susan, Janine and Noel Eddington have kindly come out to offer encouragement over the last stages and they assist Shane Ritchie in providing us with hot drinks and food.

On the last section into York we almost get lost but our support crew stop at strategic corners to help guide the way. It is warmer than the previous night, with light cloud cover, and we arrive at York in good spirits, ready for the last 80km loop to Northam and back. On setting out, after refuelling at the Old Lodge, we meet the leading riders Rod, Brian and Phil who are coming in to finish. Rod is willing to ride around the last lap with us, but we decline his kind offer.

The last leg is not without incident as Peter runs out of energy and almost stops. We coax Peter along, with the aid of a couple of chocolate bars, to Northam, where a strategic Secret Control allows us to regain our composure.

We set a steady pace over the last 30km into York, finishing the ride just before 5.00am. What a day, but we are all pleased to finish. Congratulations to Rod, Brian, Phil, Colin, Lin and Peter. Now there is time to

reflect on John and Jim, who are unable to celebrate their success, but helped so much along the way with ours. Many thanks to all those who supported us throughout the ride.
