

RIDE REPORT

SOUTH STIRLING RIDE, FEB'92 200KM

Perth based riders gathered at the Armadale Railway Station to travel with John Martin in his bus, while others went by car to Albany on Friday; the day before the event on the South Coast of Western Australia.

Those who wanted to brave Albany's cool summer nights and southerly winds, camped on the front lawn at Jane Nield's home out along the Lower Denmark Road. Phil Giddins told me in the morning that the cattle in the nearby saleyards were not very happy during the night while those of us who slept in motel or hotel rooms had a much quieter time.

Saturday morning some 30 cyclists met opposite the Town Hall in York Street Albany where we listened to general instructions from John Martin. Mrs Annette Knight, Mayor of Albany, who was in the nearby ABC Studio came out to wish us well. She paid tribute to Albany's Veteran Sportsman of the year; Jim McAuley who was riding with us and thanked Audax Australia Perth Region for making our first Country and Country Club combined Start at Albany.

Although there were 23 Randonneurs, seven others joined us for part of the way to Denmark, our first stop. John's parting words about staying in a group fell on some deaf ears. Fast riders who out-paced the support vehicle were told to look after themselves to complete the course. Albany is truly the ideal location for summer riding; early morning winds are cold and the clouds are generally evident with a hint of rain.

We left John behind as we headed out to Denmark through Elleker, Torbay and Youngs; small very early settlements each once having a rail siding. Farm land views can only be appreciated when cycling in those early mornings and in this part of what has become known as the Rainbow Coast. Albany Cycling Club members who had joined us for the 200 were still fresh when we arrived at Denmark where John and Harry Hyde; who was not riding due to a recent accident and a resulting broken shoulder had laid out our feed bags and prepared tea, coffee and or milo. Expressions of disbelief at this excellent service from our southern riders, but not from the Perth riders who had seen it all before.

Denmark to Mt. Barker was a very hilly section and proved too much for Craig Abernathy who retired at the sports ground support stop. The wind had risen from the east as we left Mt Barker over a freshly graded gravel road which was under reconstruction before heading off to Kamballup on the Chester Pass Road. Some riders who did not know which way was north headed off prematurely towards Albany.

High mountains which gave their name to this ride; The Stirlings, were off to our left on one of the most scenic roads in the whole country. Kamballup reached, fed and watered we headed south past the Porongarups; a small series of mountains, through farm lands to Albany where everyone gathered to congratulate each other for a ride well done.

Jane Nield and Harry Hyde hosted a very enjoyable barbecue where we got to know more about some of Albany bikers who appeared to be still amazed by the support crew and their service. Audax Australia Club Members should know that the Albany Cycling Club's riding shirts are made from "Coolmax" and they say that they are warm in the cold and keep you cool in the heat. They also say that this material is far superior to Lycra and other types used.

On Sunday we left Albany happy to have made many new friends and assured our hosts that we would be back again next year with a bigger and better event.

Don Briggs 11 March 1992

RIDE REPORT

THE VINEYARD WHEEL 21-22 MAR '92 400km

Although eleven people had nominated for this ride, only eight were at the Midland Town Hall starting point at 5.30am to get going at 6.00am. Midland is about 20kms from the centre of Perth and is the beginning of the Great Eastern Highway to the Eastern States.

Marian Mayes our only lady rider joined Brett Rutherford, Phil Giddins, Tom Freeman, Duncan Faux, Justin Garvin, Ross Cussons and Don Briggs and after the usual announcements about keeping together and route details we set off. The weather was very kind, a cool 21 degrees and overcast during the day until the night when it became clear and cold.

It was flat terrain with a light head-wind north to Gingin our first control where Duncan, who had broken away was preparing to leave as the rest of us arrived. Terry Ord our support team of one was on duty and proved to be an excellent part of the ride. His small Holden van was to become a welcome site at secret and main control points.

The course varied between Gingin and Hooraa from very hilly, especially near Mogumber to flat for 30kms into the check point. Terry's camp table, kettle boiling and riders stopping for tea and coffee in the main street of these country towns became a roving tourist attraction for the locals and visitors alike.

Tom decided to leave early saying we would catch him up as he had not done any training and wanted to "tonk along". With a tail wind towards Bindi Bindi he wasn't caught and consequently was leaving as we arrived. It looked like a second rider deserting the main group. Riding through several wheat-belt towns to Calingari, our next secret control turned out to be very enjoyable as it was approaching dusk and the many different birds were making their final calls for the day. Tom had already left the control and it wasn't until just before Toodyay that Tom's flashing red light was seen and finally caught by Ross and myself after staging our own little break-away.

At Toodyay Terry was asleep in his van and Duncan had gone on to Chidlow. We had retrieved our bags and started to eat before someone decided to stir our support crew. We were nearly all back together again and as we faced the 9km hill towards Clackline which wasn't very pleasant after 319kms Phil grumbled that this wasn't the last. There were three steep hills just before Chidlow our last Control and most of us knew that he was part of the course organisation and chose not to answer.

Our final reward was a 5km steep decent down Greenmount, the long escarpment hill on Great Eastern Highway to Midland. After four punctures, lighting problems and some tired slow moving legs we arrived at the finish 21 hours after we had started. Terry was still as chirpy as he was at the start and after thanking him and congratulating each other we went home to a well-earned sleep.

Don Briggs 26 March, 1992