

Checkpoint March 1995

The January 200km Night Ride By Don Briggs Audax WA

Perth Audax riders have complained that I didn't give each ride a name on the 1995 programme. If this ride needed a name; perhaps the "Prison Escape" could draw the short straw. Being a moon-lit night ride which passed the Casuarina maximum security and Kamet minimum security farm prisons; makes for the obvious - so wait for next year, you complainers.

Twenty riders left the parking area near the Brentwood Police Station at 9:00am and headed towards the Kwinana Freeway cycleway. After negotiating the Leach Highway crossing, we rode along the path passing by, under and over cross roads until we reached Thomas Road which was a familiar sight for most of us. A loop was included in the ride and it took us through the dormitory suburbs of Medina and Orelia to Wellard Road. Then onto Johnson and Orton roads to pass by the Casuarina Prison and even at this early stage there was four groups of riders. The way to ride Audax rides is at your own pace but to make it a race tends to take the fun out of it; more of that later.

David Uren stripped the thread in one of his pedal cranks and he limped into the first control lucky that he only had to climb a couple of lumps.

About five riders, including Barbara and Colin Farmer were riding "Tail End Charlie" when we arrived at Mundijong. I was keen to try something new. If I took only the time to collect some food, water and get my card signed, would it make any difference to the way my knees and legs generally felt during and after the ride? Only three riders had gone on at this stage, as he was standing holding his bike I asked Jerry Clarkson if he was ready to go. He was happy to move on so we set off into the darkness and to the small town of Byford which introduces the Nettleton Road hill.

Nettleton Road, particularly the first 5km is a struggle for most riders and the rest of the climb goes on for about 18km. Half way up the steep section Tom Freeman and a couple of his mates (hard to see who they were in the dark) went by and they greeted us at the closed Jarrahdale Hotel, sitting around enjoying a coffee and a bite to eat. Once again I convinced Jerry to leave before our muscles became too cold. This was proving to be beneficial for my system and we enjoyed the hills through to the Karnet Prison farm before the very steep descent (some of us are good at the downhill climbs) to the South West Highway. Here the wind was extremely strong coming from our front left which slowed progress as we moved toward North Dandalup, the turn-around point. At 3:15 in the morning we were surprised to see a large number of motorcycles heading in that same direction.

From North Dandalup the course was in a westerly direction and the wind pushed us along at about 30km/h which was a welcome relief after the hills. At the turn-off onto Kargotich Road we found the support car conducting a secret control and Jerry and I were the first riders through. Brett Rutherford, Rob Keogh and Duncan Faux had out-run the support vehicle and as we were to learn at the finish were not very happy. They had to ride the last section without any food. Our last stop was Kelmscott where we had a large black coffee to keep us awake through the dawn light.

A following group arrived just as we were leaving Kelmscott. With the tailwind we made up good time and on parts of the Kwinana Freeway cycleway, our speed was up to 40 - 45km/h. Duncan, Brett and Rob had arrived at the finish two hours ahead of us and they were not happy about missing out on their last food stop, but that is one of the problems for the back-up when there is a large spread of rider abilities. The night ride was a success for all but two riders who had retired, David Uren with the stripped pedal and Marion Mayes who had just not done enough training (her words). Success came for Amanda Annells, Don Briggs, Jerry Clarkson, Barbara Farmer, Colin Farmer, Duncan Faux, Chris O'Brien, Tom Freeman, Phil Giddins, Lin Hambleton, Robert Keogh, Mark Nilan, Sue Nilan, Brett Rutherford, Paul Widnall, Brian Smith, Jamie Ingram and Graham Sparnon.

The weather was warm and clear. Even in the early hours on the downhill runs it was very warm but most people enjoyed the ride and will be back for more on our next 300km night ride.