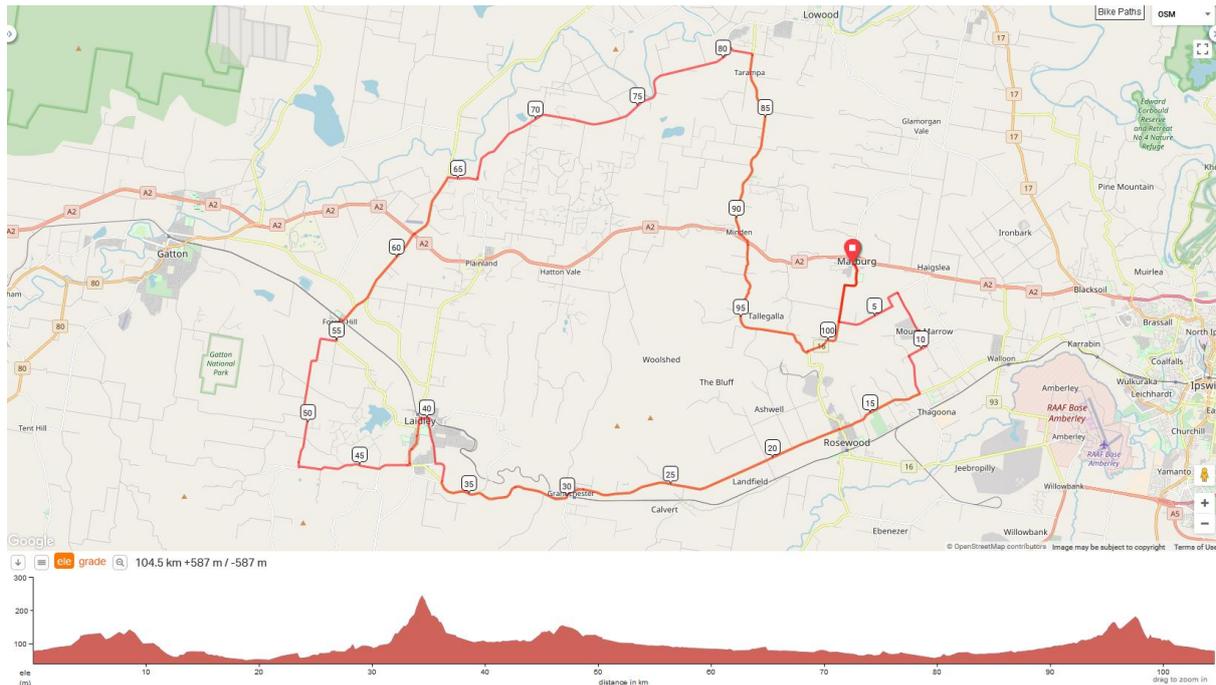


Marburg Warthog 100 – David Foster



I had signed up for the Marburg Warthog 100k. I hadn't been on the bike at all for over two weeks and so without any preparation I had been a bit trepidatious as to how long I would take to get back into the groove but there's only one way to find out.

The day had started out noticeably cooler than recent early morning starts. The drive to the start point in Marburg revealed a lot of fog in the valleys and hollows and getting out of the car I cursed myself for not bringing arm warmers at the least.

My justification to myself at that point was that a) I would warm up pretty fast on the road and b) when I took them off they would be useless ballast that I would still have to cart around even if they weigh almost nothing. Better not to bother.

Kicking off a few minutes later than the official start time it didn't take long for the peloton to string out along the flat leading out of Marburg. A left turn brought a couple of small bumps which slowed me down a fair bit but knowing that there was way worse to come I concentrated on just spinning away and sure enough without a massive effort each summit would come and I'd drop back into the big ring for the descent, trying to build momentum for the next rise.

As the penultimate rider became a match-head sized figure and finally disappeared over the hill way up front, I reminded myself that the camaraderie of Audax is one of its many attractions for me.

At one point we joined the Ipswich Rosewood Road and slotted in between groups of riders doing a charity ride out of Ipswich. From the looks they gave me as I came out of a side road I think they thought that somehow I had become lost and was only now back on track. I surprised a volunteer who was directing riders at a roundabout by going straight instead of turning left.

The route was completely new to me and I enjoy the different views and smells along the way. Lots of cows out here judging from the smell (and goats which was a surprise).

The biggest surprise was looking down into a culvert just outside of Grandchester to see a big ginger tom cat licking his genitals in that weird one-leg-straight-up way they have. Not something I expected to see out in the boonies shall we say. Why do they do that? I know, because they can.

I have found that hills in general have become more of a mental exercise overall so when the road started to rise outside of Grandchester on the approach to the biggest lump in the route profile I just put my head down and spun away. I did have to stop for a breather at one point and I think I saw Dave Booth doing the same further up the slope but couldn't be sure if it was him. The rider remounted and was soon lost from sight around a curve in any case.

To my surprise I looked back and spotted John McMullen cruising along and remembered that I passed him when he stopped to take a photo. He has this economical style (as do most experienced Audax riders it seems) that I'm trying to emulate and he swept past all the while looking like he was just going to the shops and was not only twenty percent of the way into a 200k effort.

I caught up with John as we crested the top of the hill and we made our way down the back and into Laidley together where we encountered most of the group outside the bakery so took the opportunity get the brevet signed and refuel as well.

Not wanting to spend too much time idle because I always slow drastically towards the end I took off soon afterwards. A line of traffic soon after was a surprise for such a quiet town and then the cause became apparent, a lovely old dray being drawn by two magnificent horses.

The countryside between Laidley and Forest Hill is flat, with long straight roads. The breeze was starting to pick up and the tailwind had me cruising nicely. I had a refreshing spray from an irrigator that was having most of its output blown across the road which was nice.

Most drivers so far have been pretty good about giving me space but one mental midget on this stretch decided to give me a punishment pass instead of moving over into the vacant side of the road and I swear that his mirror just missed my elbow. I mean really? Are they so threatened by someone out enjoying themselves they have to not go out of their way just to prove a point?

As the route started to swing East the wind, which was still picking up, started to give me a few moments. At first I wondered if something was awry in my head tube as the bike would take on a mind of its' own and start to wander off line. Eventually I worked out that the crosswind was affecting the gyroscopic motion of the wheels and I could now understand why those who mount those deep rim carbon wheels complain so much, they must be a bitch to control in cross-winds, mine are bad enough.

Later on a worrying rattle DID manifest itself in the head tube, something that I will have to check out 'cause it ain't normal that's for sure.

Heading South the wind was now pretty much head on and I began to really struggle. I was having a rest at one stage when Dave Booth arrived and asked if I was OK. I told him I was fine and he took off again. I had visions of trying to catch up and wheelsuck to get a bit of a tow but no joy; he disappeared from sight very quickly.

Crossing the Warrego Highway at Minden was interesting, lots of traffic, narrow lanes because of the roadworks and a body that wasn't moving well because I was starting to cramp up but I eventually made it across safely.

Not long after, Roxene and Olivia also caught up. Olivia offered to take the lead and give me some respite but I was too cramped to take up her kind offer so they kept on. As they drew away I remarked that I hoped Tallegalla Hill wasn't as bad as everyone made out which caught her by surprise. "There's another hill?" Yes Olivia!

At the end of the day and this far into the ride I could have done without it shall we say but once the top was crossed the downhill gave me my highest speed for the day and the now-tailwind swept me back into Marburg at a cracking pace. It's rare for me to see high 30's on the flat that's for sure.

Overall another great ramble in the countryside and a sense of achievement for getting home in one piece and within the cutoff.

Many thanks to RO Peter for his efforts and kudos to all who participated. Lots of laughs, smiles and encouragement from all make for a fun day even if parts of it hurt at the time.