

# How did Audax get started in Queensland?

Dave Minter

“Son, perhaps you’d better pull up a chair. Seein’ as how you’ve grown so much, time you learn how it all started...”

Once upon a time, during the early '80s, a high school kid read a magazine article (probably written by Terry Gross) about an impossibly long bike ride away across the sea, Paris-Brest-Paris. The stories and legends caught his imagination; ‘someday’ he was going to ride it! Someday took quite a while to come round. The nearest similar events were 1000 km away. Instead he threw himself into touring and racing, but the siren call of PBP remained.

Almost a decade later, the kid figured out that nobody was going to organise any nearby brevets, so he talked a mate, ‘Animal’, into driving with him to Sydney to ride Russell Moore’s Green Valley Twin Century. The fact that Animal had his broken wrist in a cast didn’t seem too important. That nobody else entered the 300km option in 1992 didn’t make much difference either, there was no point in driving 2000km for a short ride. In any case, after the first 100km there were plenty of riders sitting on our wheels as Steve Walker and I cruised round at 30 km/h. We finished and enjoyed it but, back in Brisbane, not many people seemed too keen on doing longer rides.

The following year, a couple of blokes were talked into joining me on an Opperman All Day Trial and one dragged a mate along as support crew. One rider had never done more than 100km before and the other hadn’t ridden further than 70km that year. Regardless, we submitted a 500km schedule, based on the previous year’s 13-hour 300km brevet—not the brightest move in retrospect!

After finishing work Friday afternoon, we drove to central NSW, managing a couple of hours’ sleep on a railway platform before starting at 9 am Saturday.

We stayed on schedule most of the way but on the Murray Valley Highway it was bitterly cold, particularly for thin-blooded Northern types. I’d brought some spare warm clothing and, after distributing it amongst the team, we **just** managed to avoid too many icicles forming. To really make life tough, we’d scheduled a 160 km stage between checkpoints at this point, as we couldn’t see any suitable stops on the map and none of us had local knowledge. By 2 am, life was pretty tough. I know we all fell asleep on the bike at various points, happily avoiding bitumen impacts. After finally reaching the next checkpoint, I think we removed our helmets before flaking out in the car but I wouldn’t bet my life on it.

After three comatose hours, we finished short, doing about 430km before driving to Albury. Luckily we still qualified for our medals. Then came the only disappointment of the ride. Andrew Row and Pedro Plowman had been talked into this madness because Oppy would hand out our medals. Unfortunately, Mavis was ill that day and we never got to meet the great man. After nearly drowning in our lunches during the presentations (we needed the extra sleep), we drove back to Brisbane in shifts, dropping the hire car off with 3000+ extra kilometres on the clock (unlimited kilometre car hires can be very useful). We got back in time for Andrew to do his uni exam and for the rest of us to get to work. One of the few bits I remember about the Oppy lunch was Tim Laugher telling us to organise some brevets in Queensland. So, with an undaunted Andrew, we did!

**“Yes, you want to get to the good bits, the ones your mates talk about behind the bike sheds? We’re getting to that!”**

Soon afterwards, a grey-headed bloke wandered into the bike shop where I worked, wanting some bike fettling before eventually heading to Britain for PBP qualifiers. I happily told him that Queensland planned to run a Super Series in 1994 and 1995, so he could qualify locally. Lindsay Green is a legend in my mind, never looking stressed during a brevet and still a meticulous Queensland Secretary.

Our first 200 had over 30 riders. That first year, we held our events about every two months, all in the Lockyer Valley. Just after the 200, I got a phone call from a Yank who liked doing long rides. Gale Schaub had done PBP and RAAM qualifiers in California in the 1980s, along with tons of other long-distance events. We drew heavily on his extensive experience in the early years; unfortunately back problems now limit his riding.

For the first couple of years, Andrew and I ran most of the brevets. Virtually all events were fully supported and, courtesy of excessive advertising in local bike shops, we generally had reasonable fields for the shorter brevets, typically 30 or so for a 200 and in the ‘teens for a 300, dropping to single figures for a 600 km. As the year progressed, I thought that a new ride might be popular, riding 100 miles from midnight, finishing at breakfast and aiming for riders to gain weight at food stops along the way. With Audax Australia’s blessing, the first Midnight Century took place just before Christmas 1994 and, contrary to predictions, it proved quite popular. Howard Davies has ridden most of them, often with Janelle or Georgina on the tandem. We continued to ratchet-up the support and for a while awarded unique finishers badges each year. By the time it was handed over to

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other organisers, we were getting 60 starters.

The following year, we held a 1000km brevet and sent the first two Queenslanders to PBP: Kristine Kersley (100km rider to ancienne du PBP in under a year) and Lindsay Green (cruising round in about 73 hours). Unfortunately I missed the first Queensland Oppy that year due to a car-bike interface but it was another great success.

**“There you go, son. I hope you don’t need extensive psychoanalysis now!”**

That was Audax Queensland in the beginning, Lindsay with his wisdom and impeccable riding style, Gale with endless enthusiasm and knowledge, your occasionally-scatty scribe and Andrew giving sustained early support.

**“Now you’re all grown up.”**

Things kept developing: Gale Schaub headed Audax Queensland for a year before passing it to Thomas Maslen, with his background of long-distance rides in Victoria, California and France. The hilly “Wonders of Glorious Mee” 200 and Nouveau Randonneur rides offered new challenges. Several lucky riders enjoyed the outstanding support of some early Tamworth brevets (even their flooded first 600) and three banana-benders finished PBP in 1999. Vaughan Kippers took up the reins of Audax Queensland and a small but enthusiastic group in Townsville held brevets in North Queensland for a while. More locals made it to PBP in 2003, one flying from Britain to do a Queensland 600. Our rides must be good!

Queensland held its second 1000km brevet in 2006, with the riders outnumbered by an attentive support crew. Member numbers are growing (third largest Audax state) and around 300 individuals are listed in our records. Qualifying for the 2007 PBP meant that our supported 600s attracted entries in the teens for the first time in this part of the world.

New organisers have come forward with events on the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Toowoomba for a calendar that will interest long-distance riders most weekends. Next time you’re in Queensland, bring your bike. You’re bound to enjoy the ride!