

*Terry Ord recounts a 300km ride from 30 years ago starting in Midland, up Green Mount hill on to Clackline, York, Beverly, Brookton then back along the Brookton Highway through Kalamunda to the start point.*

It was nearly 4am as we assembled at Midland Town Hall. When I arrived, Phil was already eating his well-earned breakfast having cycled about 50km from Fremantle just to get to the starting point. I always feel like hitting him when he does things like that, it makes me feel so inept.

By 4am everybody I could see - which at that time in the morning was only the guy next to me - was ready to roll. The organisers were beginning to be harassed by awkward fundamental questions - like "What the hell am I doing here at 4am on a Sunday morning?"

Nevertheless, we set off towards our first objective and I immediately took the lead. This first stretch of 50 metres of flat main road to the first traffic lights was going to be my one and only opportunity. One of the younger riders who had been asleep since we started fell off his bike at the traffic lights, and unfortunately grazed his knee badly. He was one of two young teenagers whose company we enjoyed for the rest of the first leg to Clackline.

I persevered with the sweltering pace of 24kms per hour until we hit Green Mount hill travelling East on the Great Eastern Highway. Having spent over \$100 two days before on three super low gears and a reverse, I was surprised to find myself getting up the hill fairly comfortably. Of course I'd been long since passed by the group intent on making it home before daybreak and another group who were concerned they might crash into my stabilizers. The cool temperatures, the excellent company and the relief for those of us who had experienced the Red Hill heat and wind from the last Audax, all made for a good start. The road to Clackline was undulating and relatively uneventful with our group of about 15 or 16 riders really enjoying the early morning air which in

some pockets was quite cold. My bike - a first war army reject and used by the Italians in the Abyssinian campaign was doing well until the seat bolt sheered. We all gathered round to collect the saddle and various fixtures and make the usual comments about the strength of rear ends.

*Photo: Clackline Bridge taken 2014*



By this time our reduced band was well behind as they stayed with me to help me acquire a high-pitched voice riding to the

first station 11km further on. Very willing hands quickly found me a bolt for the saddle and we said hello to everyone as we arrived and they left - BO is a funny thing, people refuse to tell you, you have it. Hot soup was being ladled out to everyone who arrived before we did - I put an official complaint into the organiser about the lack of tail end soup facilities but he said he couldn't hear it because my voice was at dog whistle level.

The second section of the ride took us down a delightful set of pot holes mixed with a little tarmac to York which is a lovely small town and one of the first inland townships of Western Australia now trying to be a tourist centre. As a Yorkshire man it brought back memories of another York far away with its genuine plastic Tudor oak beams and olde worlde souvenirs made in Taiwan.

The ride to this point had been easy - in fact very pleasant, but unfortunately our young friend was having problems with his knee and decided not to join us for the next encounter of 'brain overcomes body' subtitled 'stupidity wins the day'.

The ride to Beverley (another misplaced Yorkshire town) was on flat terrain with a slight breeze against us. Our group was down to seven by this stage but I'd never been this way before and was enjoying a pleasant ride. That was my brain, my bum was however under a local anaesthetic. Some of us were beginning to realise that 300km was further than the daily ride to the deli after all, but we held the group together and to me that is the greatest feature of Audax riding.

Conversation is a marvellous time spender and reduces the incidence of suicide attempts by the riders on the latter stages of these long rides. Janice - the only female in our group turned out to be not only a long lost friend from my squash days, but an excellent conversationalist, keeping us all in relatively high spirits describing what sounded to me like periodic full moon sexual exploits in the woods over a 24 hour period with somebody called Ro-Gaining. I was surprised since husband was riding in the group ahead of us.

We all reached the next station at Brookton a little worse for wear. One group of superhuman souls had already left some time before but the middle group with Dave, Arie, Don, Kleber et al were still stuffing themselves from combinations of supplies from the support trailer superbly run by John and Anne Waters and offerings from the local petrol station. Their 7 day old pre-cooked, pre-heated, double micro-waved, stir fried tomato sauce mixed with meat pie (is that the right way round?) was a joy to behold and pleasure to watch someone else eat.

Bottoms and legs refused to rise to the next occasion, another 60 odd kilometres north along the Brookton highway. This is undulating terrain which by this stage was all uphill so we made sure we were the last to leave in case anyone needed help apart from us. By this time we were down to 5 'players' plus John Martin who is my hero on these rides -he consumes my abuse and imbecilic twitterings with amazing resilience and good humour and helps us all at the bottom end of physical ineptitude.

By this time the heat was also noticeable and the wind had managed to change direction to match our turn, so we were again cycling into it. The wind in WA - for those of you in the East who are not aware, is a taunting intelligence able to blow against whichever direction you decide to travel in.

There are two exceptions to that, early in the morning before it's had time to think (providing you're travelling west), and late in the evening up the West Coast highway when it can't see you. Paul's delightful wife and boys met us at the next stop which was littered with distraught bodies in various stages of decomposition. After several litres of fluid and sugar pretending to be food, the middle group were on their way leaving us to consume everything in sight to regain some energy.

Paul was not feeling well at this stage but I was encouraging, and told him to pack it in. His wife said it was downhill all the way to Kalamunda, roads must be totally different from the wheel of a 10 tonne truck because from here to the next secret rendezvous somebody had to tell me where the downhill bits were - an identity crisis was looming and by this time my bum was submitting legal separation papers.

For some reason - possibly about 6km downhill and the cool evening air - the last part of the ride was very pleasant and all six of us made it into Midland, tired but very pleased that we had conquered whatever each of us had set out to conquer that day.

For myself I am determined to stay at the back of the pack and shall continue to train every day in order to retain the honour of being last back for every Audax ride in 1990.

BREVETS for the 300km AUDAX 8<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 1990 were well earned by:

Glynn Birds Don Briggs Graeme Burton Sam Burton Brett Rutherford Andrew Oakeley Terry Ord Frank Pratt  
John Turley Kleber Claux Colin Farmer Phil Giddins Fred Hacking John Walker Janice Millar Lin Hambleton Trevor  
Holm Harry Hyde Paul Irvine John Martin John Meakin David Midolo Anthony Jennings Barry Jones Barry Kershaw  
Arie Lemson