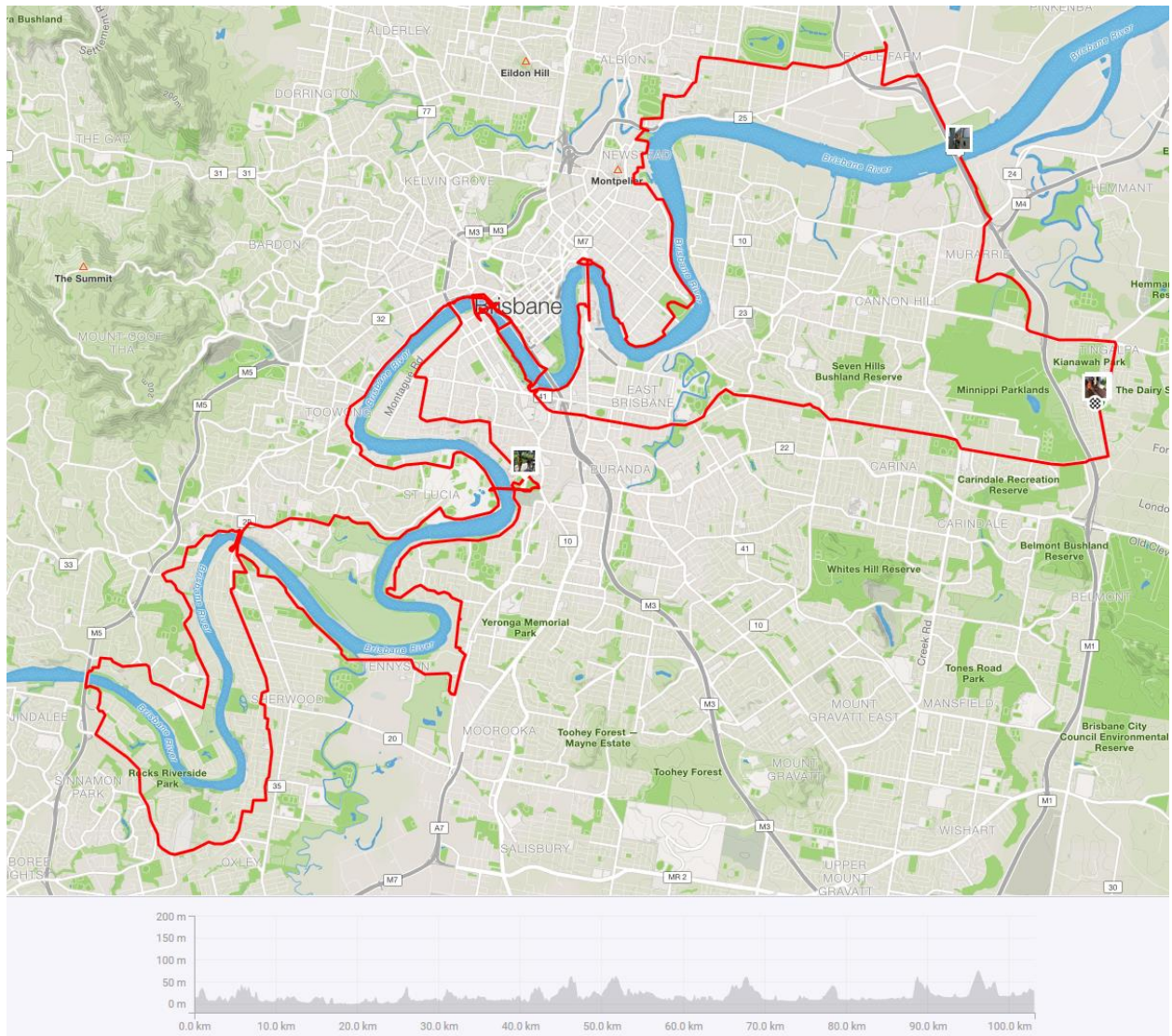


11 out of 11

January 1, 2018

Simon has delivered the first ride for 2018, possibly the first Audax ride anywhere in the world for 2018.

Comprising 100 kilometers around Brisbane, this ride loops around the river from the imposing Sir Leo Hielscher Bridges in the eastern most part of the course, to the Centenary bridge in the west.



It takes in numerous bike paths and scenic backroads, traverses less than 1000m of climbing and is a joy to ride. As with all Audax rides there is an element of challenge, and on this day it was the heat that caused me some grief later in the day.

15 riders gathered at the appointed time and the swifter riders quickly vanished into the distance. In my case that was just about everyone else. Within a few kilometres, John appeared and he kindly accompanied me for the rest of the day. This afforded me the luxury of just focusing on surviving riding, rather than navigating as well.



The first 25 kilometres passed uneventfully looping through the city and we arrived at the first stop at Dutton Park having crossed the river three times. At this point the weather was cool, if a little humid. After having the cards endorsed, we hit the road again, heading out towards the western leg of the course, crossing the Walter Taylor bridge, Centenary bridge and then back across the pedestrian bridge at Indooroopilly before returning to the checkpoint at Dutton Park via the bridge at the university.

This 40 kilometre segment was humid and hilly in parts and by the time we returned to the checkpoint I was feeling the heat. At this point Simon produced a sandwich, cold drinks were gratefully consumed and ice made its way into the drink bottles. Truly a life saved right there.



Suitably revived and with four river crossings remaining, I headed out back onto the course with John to cover the remaining 35 kilometres. A fast descent from the check point saw the Go Between and Goodwill bridges crossed quickly. A very pleasant cruise by the river saw the Story bridge crisscrossed as we looped up and over and then under again on the way to the final river crossing. Once again bike paths comprised the majority of the course at this point, with the navigation of other path users adding to the interest along the way. John effortlessly threaded through the mélange and we continued on our way.

The Brekky Creek hotel came and went marking the onset of the climb up Cookesly Street and the immediate subsequent climb up Queens Road at Hamilton (12% allegedly). I managed to ride to the top of Cookesly Street and walked the rest. It's amazing how much steeper these hills get in the heat. As I made my way on foot up Queens Road I was heckled by an elderly resident who advised that they rode up the hill on a bike with no gears back in the day. Thanks for that, very uplifting in my hour of need.

After negotiating the resident and making it to a point I could mount the bike and ride on, we descended, crossing a number of traffic calming speed bumps. On one of these my rear light parted company with the bike. I quickly stopped to recover the debris and noted a few squashed batteries at the side of the road. It seems this may be a common occurrence at this point.

John relentlessly pedals through Ascot and towards the gateway. I follow contemplating the strength sapping properties of the heat and humidity. We stop briefly at Kingsford Smith Drive and I dump half a bidon of water over my head, a thing I have never done before. I am immediately rewarded with a torrent of sweat flooding my eyes but I don't care. The brief respite from the heat was worth it. Onwards.

John points out a water bubbler at the foot of the gateway climb. Duly noted we move on agreeing to pause at the top to regroup. John suggests I may get there before him and I reply that I seriously doubt it. About half way up I spy another water bubbler and pause to stick my head under it. I am properly feeling the heat now.

I have doubts about the accuracy of the Garmin's temperature recording capability, but the peak on the right hand side below corresponds with traversing the gateway. It says 39 degrees max, and I have no reason to doubt it. I was miserably hot at this point.



The top of the climb appears and John is waiting, looking relaxed and comfortable. He even reports his chocolate covered snack is in fine shape. What was observed and noted for the future is that there is no water at the top of the bridge. Seems odd but there you go. So if you are in need, don't wait until you get to the top to fill up. The water tastes foul as it happens but it is wet and better than none at all.



Pausing briefly, I am somewhat revived. We remount and descend towards the final checkpoint. John cheerfully advises this is not far and I am glad to hear it. Much of the remaining journey is downhill which is great since even the slightest rise in the road is causing concern in the heat at this point. John continues unperturbed, moving at his regular pace and quietly demonstrating his experience under the conditions.

We turn onto Belmont Road and as I head into the car park to mark my triumphant return, the rear light chooses to launch from the bike and hit the road again. Quietly contemplating dark thoughts about the parentage of the light's designers, I stop to gather the wreckage and then roll into the final checkpoint.

It is done, marking the completion of my first supported Audax ride.



A fair amount of work goes into preparing and supporting the ride. The support from Simon and Vaughan was very much appreciated, it contributed significantly to keeping me going. Simon rode the course earlier in the week, I can only imagine how hot that would have been.

A big shout out to John whose company and guidance made my day. He suggested that he merely provided a target for me to keep up with, but he is too modest, delivering much more than that. He provided the navigation, knowledge of the roads, pointing out hazards and interesting things, and encouragement at the times it was needed. In particular, his relaxed and unwavering riding pace contributed significantly to my getting to the end in one piece.

This ride also marks a personal milestone in the recovery from an injury which occurred at the end of 2016. At that time there were doubts about ever riding again. Now I am pleased to say that I look forward with renewed confidence to regularly resuming these sorts of distances again. Dealing with the heat is something I'll need to work on but was certainly manageable.

So, a great day out. The course is sensational, a must-do if you have not done it before. Add it to your list for next time.

Keith Heinrich

Jan 3, 2018