

No. 46–Summer 2010/11

Checkpoint

The magazine for long distance cyclists

Audax Australia Cycling Club



Non-PAP pages deleted

Perth-Albany-Perth
A phenomenal experience

UAF in WA
Audax 225 takes off

Mallee Routes
Pure enjoyment

Centenaire du Tourmalet 1000
Tourmalet at UAF pace



Audax Australia Cycling Club Inc.

Association No. A0014462N
ARBN 125 562 307
www.audax.org.au

President Kerri-Ann Smith
president@audax.org.au

Vice President Gareth Evans
vicepresident@audax.org.au - 0408 497 721

Secretary Helen Lew Ton
secretary@audax.org.au - 03 9329 9757

Treasurer Alan Baker
treasurer@audax.org.au - 07 4125 2737

Committee Members
Lisa Turner
zip13@netspace.net.au - 02 6722 2210

Ian Bailey
iansrs@bigpond.com - 0428 481 474

Brian Furze
bjfurze@gmail.com - 0409 716 427

Peter Lunt
peter.lunt@inet.net.au - 0402 305 250

Region Presidents
ACT Tom Nankivell^{NC}
tnankivell@pc.gov.au - 0432 409 755

NSW Howard Dove^{NC}
sydney@audax.org.au - 02 9476 5310

QLD Pat Lehane^{NC}
patlehane101@gmail.com - 04 0870 2808

SA Richard Scheer^{NC}
r.scheer@fugrolads.com - 04 2319 5966

TAS Paul Gregory^{NC}
paul.gregory@parliament.tas.gov.au - 03 6233 6619

VIC George Judkins^{NC}
victoria@audax.org.au - 0419 155 804

WA Nick Dale^{NC}
wa.president@audax.org.au - 0400 300 850

NZ Duncan McDonald
paruig@yahoo.co.nz - +64 21 267 2193

^{NC} National Committee member

Membership Secretary Lorraine Allen
membership@audax.org.au - 03 5783 2427

National Calendar Coordinator Bob McHugh
calendar@audax.org.au

IT Committee Chair Garry Armsworth
gwarm.24@gmail.com - 0411 252 772

Homologations Committee Chair Lisa Turner
zip13@netspace.net.au - 02 6722 2210

Life Members

Lorraine Allen
Phil Bellette
Hans Dusink
Terry Gross
Don Halton
Enid Halton
Tim Laughler
John Martin
Russell Moore

Checkpoint

Editor Trevor Gosbell
checkpoint@audax.org.au

Brevet Editor David Killick
results@audax.org.au

Distribution Ian Boehm
distribution@audax.org.au

Checkpoint

No. 46—Summer 2010/11

Upfront

2. Editorial
3. President's Pedals with Kerri-Ann Smith

Gippsland Gambol

4. A 200km brevet by tandem

My First Brevet

6. Alpine Classic, 1992

Mallee Routes

7. 51666

Fleche Opperman All Day Trial

10. A little background on the Oppy

Audax 225

12. A short history of UAF in Australia
13. PBP Audax 2011

UAF 400 Singleton

14. Close to perfect

UAF 600 Quindanning

15. Australia's first 600 km UAF brevet

Centenaire du Tourmalet 1000

18. Tourmalet at a steady pace

Perth-Albany-Perth

21. My PAP 1200
25. A wonderful cycling holiday
26. "You're just desperados cryin' in the rain"
29. A band of slightly out-of-the-ordinary gentlemen?
30. 0 to 1200 in 4.5 Months

Le 1000 du Sud

34. A totally different challenge

Paris-Brest-Paris

36. My PBP journey on hold

Semaine Fédérale en Australie

37. A Pom's-eye view

Club News

40. National Committee Happenings
41. Notices

Brevets

42. Results compiled by Surly Dave

Cover: Eamonn McCloskey (WA) in fine form on the approach to Bunbury, Perth-Albany-Perth
This page: Rus Hamilton (Vic), George Judkins (Vic), and Vincent Muoneke (USA) riding from Pembrerton to Walpole, Perth-Albany-Perth



Opinions expressed in this magazine are those of the respective authors, and not necessarily those of the Audax Australia Cycling Club Inc.

Editorial

Isn't there some kind of curse that goes something like, "May you live in interesting times"? Things have been a little "interesting" for me lately: already pushing to hit the printing deadline for this issue, I experienced that modern version of Murphy's Law, the very inconvenient computer meltdown.

Replacing a computer is hassle enough at the best of times but with a deadline (and Christmas!) looming, all I can say is...I'm glad I had backup. Without backup this issue would have looked much more sparse than what you see before you now!

May I offer this little tip (unrelated to cycling though it may be)? If you have a computer (or phone, GPS, camera, etc) that has any data on it that you don't want to lose (or that would be inconvenient to replace), back it up. Now. And then backup the backup. Rinse and repeat daily for best results, health and happiness. It's an approach that has served me well more than once.

Let's get historical

With Audax Australia Cycling Club entering its 30th Anniversary year, I will be looking to print some stories covering the history of the club. Are you able to help? Do you have any old Audax material (e.g. photos, records, early copies of *Checkpoint/ The Journal*, etc)? Were you there in the early days? Or do you know someone who was? Do you have some personal memories of Oppy, Graham Woodrup, Terry Gross, or any of the other important personalities across the history of the Club? If so, let's talk!

Got photo?

Those who frequent the audax-oz mailing list (or its replacement Google Group) will know that I don't mind putting it out there when I want photos for *Checkpoint*.

But now I'm after a special effort. I'll be needing 'historical' photos to illustrate retrospective stories over the coming year. So if you've been around the Club for a year or ten, could you dust off your old photos and see if you have any Audax shots there? I'm more than happy to scan and return original prints.

As an important side-effect, I think it's an opportunity for us to stock up an electronic archive of Club photos.

Calendar

I must say a big thanks Bob McHugh and all of the regional calendar coordinators who put up with my ranting and raving and demands for responses on unreasonably short timelines during the production of *Rides Calendar* booklet.

Despite a few bloopers (for corrections see the Noticeboard column in this issue), I hope you'll think it's a quality product that you can confidently hand on to other interested cyclists. If so, I guess it's in no small part due to our shift to a colour glossy cover for the booklet, and David Temby's excellent photo on the front.

I really love that shot, because it shows two experienced members clearly enjoying one of our events in an unmistakably Australian setting.

And in case you're wondering, we didn't blow the budget on the glossy cover; the

printer who does the *Calendar* booklet was able to print the colour cover for slightly cheaper than the greyscale on tinted paper—who'd have thunk it? (I only wish they'd mentioned this to me earlier.)

Advertisers

I don't know what you think about advertising in our Club publications, but clearly I'm not opposed to it. Apart from the benefit of advertising revenue helping to defray production costs, quality advertising can be informative and aesthetically pleasing. If you do use any of the advertisers in *Checkpoint* or the *Rides Calendar* booklet, please remember to mention that you heard about them through Audax.

The Western Australia issue?

I was tempted to rename this the 'Western Australia issue'. What with Perth-Albany-Perth recently and the UAF style of riding getting some serious traction in the WA Region (including Australia's first UAF 1000 km brevet this season), there's plenty to tell.

Cheers,

Trevor



Got some old photos? I want them!

checkpoint@audax.org.au

My PAP 1200

Malcolm Rogers

In the days leading up to the start, my aim was to remain calm and not dwell on the fact that I hadn't completed a brevet of more than 600 km since 2003 and a 1200 km since PBP 1999. Age and illness (DVT, clots in the lung, collapsed lung) had eroded most of my natural robust fitness. Importantly I had to convince my treating doctors that not only could I do this ride, I needed to do this ride for my own self-confidence. Their final acquiescence, with caveats attached followed and I was on my way except perhaps for my long-suffering lady wife who doubted my drive to do this.

The excitement and anticipation of the 5 am start in the Perth pre-dawn darkness was palpable. Remaining calm I decided to keep to the rear of the field for the tricky ride out along the bike path for the first half-hour or so. However once dawn broke and sensing quickening pace with the increased light I rode through the field into the lead group fearing and not wanting to be behind the inevitable early mass start prang. Averaging over 30 km/h for the first two hours along the bike path strung the field out and made the ride safer with riders generally grouping with others of their own road experience and skill level.

Control 1: Mandurah 72 km, 7.33 am, 29.19 km/h

Mandurah was a pleasant and welcome in and out affair of 25 minutes.

The journey on to Bunbury was a delight along the coastal path past immaculate seafront homes with overhanging arrays of gazanias, I think, those prolific multicoloured daisies and also wonderful bird loving enclaves of grevilleas. The continual navigation on and off the bike path became a bit tedious but I think we managed all right.

Control 2: Bunbury 181 km, 11:45 am, 27.12 km/h

We had now run into a strong headwind accompanied by squally and cold rain showers. The hot soup was perfectly timed, just as though to coincide with weather change.

The journey to Busselton was a test for me. Still in the lead group of about 15–20 riders formed a pace line unable to form an echelon to protect following riders from the strong headwind because of the main roads we were now travelling on. We were travelling at a total average speed of 34 km/h when I decided it was too fast

for me now and not soon after I was joined again by a regular riding buddy Stephen Page, also from Sydney and we rode together until he started cramping. With mutual understanding I left Stephen to ride on my own, to cold and windy Busselton.

Control 3: Busselton 239 km, 2.59 pm, 25.88 km/h

A very windy, cool/cold, 20-minute pit stop. Held up by someone who wanted to debate dynamo LEDs compared with highly focused battery types.

The journey to Margaret River was the turning point in the appearance of the ride. The first half was through very flat and exposed dairy and lucerne country and you just couldn't get any protection from the wind. However the latter half was of more undulating and pretty terrain where it was possible to escape the wind. For the first time I was able to freewheel part of the course downhill, it was a buzz!

Control 4: Margaret River 297 km, 6.15 pm, 22.6 km/h

An in and out affair of about 30 minutes includes welcome snacks and a hot cup of tea.

The journey to Alexander Bridge was the first night section and pretty boring not having a clue of what sort of country you are riding through. I rode on and off with others and the wind dropped or was coming in off the right. Met and chatted with Alf Hoop from Canberra.

Control 5: Alexander Bridge 333 km, 8.32 pm, 21.55 km/h

A cosy and quickly served hot meal by helpful volunteers, bottles filled for me and I'm on my way again in about 45 minutes.

The journey to Pemberton was a tedious and tiring leg. Again the

disorientation caused by not knowing where you are or any familiar landmarks makes it more tiring. Most of us learn to ride the longer ride sections by dividing them up into smaller parts but when you have a section with no recognisable parts you are at a loss.

Control 6: Pemberton 425 km, 1.15 am, 21.07 km/h

A very welcome hot meal prepared by the charming and engaging Ronnie McInnes and then led off for a shower and sleep by camp commander Helen. Shared my soap with Gary Baker from Vancouver who bunked underneath me. In bed by 2.30.

Up at 6.30, feeling fairly fresh. Dressed, bag repacked, breakfasted, toileted, drinks prepared, away by 8 am and on my way to Shannon National Park control. Good to be riding in the daylight again. Timbered country, quite beautiful here.

Control 7: Shannon NP 490 km, 11.06 am, 16.32 km/h

Pleasant, friendly pit stop in forest clearing. Top up bottles, orange segments in 15 minutes.

The journey to Walpole through lighter forested country into more typical coastal sandy soils and some dramatic buried rocks emerging from the ground. Met up with Garry Skeers' squad from Wagga and was happy to ride in a group again

Control 8: Walpole 555 km, 2.29 pm, 16.62 km/h

In and out pit stop of about 25 minutes. Top up drink bottles, orange, fruit cake.

The journey to Denmark was similar to typical southeastern Australia coastal dairy and timber country, roads undulating, varying direction. Fatigue and tiredness began to set in and had



The field stretched out along the bike path on the way out of Perth.

a brief hallucination when I saw my lengthened shadow from the setting sun behind me run over by oncoming cars. This really startled me and made more alert.

Control 9: Denmark 621 km, 6.16 pm, 16.7 km/h

In and out pit stop of about 30 minutes, with a bottle of coke from the supermarket and a delicious freshly brewed coffee by Control Captain, Ross Cussons' barista son, who told me he only got into the mobile coffee business because he noticed his wife spent more on coffee than he spent on beer.

The night journey into Albany became tedious because of my weariness despite my double caffeine hit at Denmark. The bypass route into Albany along the railway line just didn't seem to want to end. Spent the last 25 km navigating into Albany and to the

Residential College with Wally Bigler. Wally rode a beautifully prepared "Kish" of California, titanium framed bike. I had ridden behind Wally on and off from the start and knew his bike specs inside out.

Control 10: Albany 679 km, 10.25 pm, 16.42 km/h

Finding the College was a bit of a challenge, especially by the steep approach in the dark. Relieved to see the clean and spacious dining room and individual sleeping quarters, not to mention having a whole bathroom to myself. The whole process of checking in, having a hot meal, showering and getting to bed consumed three valuable hours, which I still can't properly account for.

In previous PBPs I never slept in organised accommodation, preferring to sleep "rough" if and whenever

I needed to, because of the time involved. But as I was hoping only to finish this event I was eternally grateful to Nick for organising this level of luxury accommodation.

I finally had three solid hours of sleep and after a big breakfast, repacking and delivering my bag to the van got way about 7 am.

Control 11: Mt Clarence 684 km, 6.50 am, 13.75 km/h

There were two stages to the ascent of the Mt Clarence lookout and on the second I dismounted, absolutely breathless with heart pounding. I knew the symptoms and realised that I was the danger zone, my lung just not coping under stress and would now have to ease off even further. Every minute was now precious and would have to be more judicious about any time spent off the bike if I wanted to finish this ride within the limit. The view from the lookout over Albany harbour was truly spectacular. I planned to come back to show my wife on a car journey back to Sydney.

The journey to Stirling National Park checkpoint was initially along pretty coastal hinterland but then finally along a mainly flat route overrun with triple road train units approaching in constant convoy from the north. I was told later they were part of an operation to move all the remaining previous year's bumper grain harvest from the wheat belt in the north to the Albany silos before the new harvest about to start. Some of the trucks would slow but those, which maintained their top legal speed, would create such a pressure wave, I had grip firmly to hold my line. Daytime temperature beginning to warm up. It was pleasant to feel the sun on my forearms.

Control 12: Stirling NP 768 km, 11.05 am, 14.22 km/h

About 30 minutes for an in and out pit stop, make up sports drink, cup of tea, orange pieces, fruit cake. Met old acquaintance Barry Moore, talked about an Ancien's misadventures, PBP 1995, etc.

The solo journey to Gnowangerup was quiet and uneventful except for slowing down to enquire if a distressed looking Alf Hoop was all right, standing in the shade on the side of the road. He told me that he had an asthma attack and was unsure how long he could continue.



Every brevet needs an espresso machine and roaming barista

Control 13: Gnowewangerup 830 km, 2.40 pm, 14:41 km/h

Spent about 60 minutes at the Gnowewangerup Roadhouse, found a chemist and bought Medcream for open saddle sores. An ordinary if not uninspiring place and happy to leave except for some helpful kids who pointed out directions for me.

The pleasant solo journey to Katanning was uneventful except for meeting John Morris, a GP from North Carolina, who was actually a NZ entrant. Had seen him on and off through the entire ride, his well turned out Surly bike and non-Lycra apparel being his distinguishing trademarks. Also passed Garry Skeers and squad member emerging from a country pub calling out that the beer was good. Lucky buggers, I thought. He later told me they had fish and chips and no alcohol.

Control 14: Katanning 890 km, 6.20 pm, 14.53 km/h

Charlie's Café was a bit of a rumbly country cafe but were able to provide some honest and reasonable hot food and clean cool water to make up drinks. Scared that one of the rumbling kids was going to pinch part or all of my bike outside. Put on night gear and set off for Wagin this time with Barry Moore. after about 60 minutes.

The journey to Wagin accompanied by Barry was a relief. His interesting conversation kept me alert and the time passed quickly. It was a relief to ride with someone who had such an intuitive road sense and easy relaxed rhythm. Had it

not been a night stage this would have been my favourite part of the ride.

Control 15: Wagin 947 km, 2.57 km/h

Welcomed in by Barbara and Colin Farmer whom I had never met before but knew of their legendary status. Barbara did most of talking and fussing about to make us comfortable, fed and watered. Unfortunately had to tell Barry I was feeling weary and as he set off I had a one hour power nap in somebody's parked car. On my way again after approx 90 minutes.

Just after the beginning of the journey to Williams there were what appeared to be bike lights travelling erratically off to the side of the road. They happened

You reckon he's looking forward to the next 2 km?



Photo: Maile Neel

to be those of a rider who had come off and was seeking help to repair his rear wheel. A conference gathered around this frantic rider on how best to fix a broken spoke on the wheel's drive side. It was a 36 spoke wheel so I knew, at worst, he only had to re-true to get by but that didn't seem to be an option. I called out 'does anybody have a flexi spoke?' There was a silence then somebody asked 'What's a flexi spoke?' I explained and miraculously somebody offered a kevlar number with instructions attached. The main conference left leaving the rider and a friend to hold a light to do the job and I was on my way again. Rest of ride fairly uneventful and glad to reach Williams.

Control 16: Williams 1047 km, 14.5 km/h

Reluctant to go through the whole procedure of checking in and unpacking my bag for the sleep stop, I went through the motions because Nick and his tireless crew provided it and I was weary. After eating a welcome hot meal, showering, I went to sleep for two good hours with a chorus of 60 or so snorers. Up at 6 am and away by 7 am I felt confident that I had it in the bag.

The journey to Hotham Valley started well enough with lovely ride out along the Pinjarra Rd and I began to think this was the nicest part of the ride so far. There wasn't any head wind, the sky was clear and the sun was deliciously warm on my forearms.

Now I'm not a superstitious person but a couple of things happened that could have warned me of things to come. The ride caravan passed me, in

tow, probably on its way to the next checkpoint at Hotham Valley. About 30 minutes later just before the turn into Lower Hotham Rd, a farmer yelled out to me asking where I was going. When I replied Pinjarra he said I was going to Harvey. In a couple of minutes of self-doubt I saw the de-wheeled caravan by the side of the road and realised I was still on the right course. There was a small climb out the valley, where all the valley side had been carved away by excavators and which, I was later told, was one of WA's rich bauxite deposits. The climb brought me to an abrupt stop. My heart was pounding and I was totally breathless. Walking to the top of the rise above the bauxite conveyor belt I got back on the bike to coast down to the supposed checkpoint near the corner with Pinjarra/Williams Rd. When I arrived Dave Minter and Judith Swallow, who had passed me not long before were there looking perplexed. 'Where's the checkpoint?' they asked. After a mobile call to Nick, David was told to ride on further along the Pinjarra Rd and wait for another club vehicle to arrive and officiate. All this happened in good time and we were processed and offered oranges and ice-cold soft drinks and cordial. It also gave my lungs and heart a bit of time to rest.

Control 17: Hotham Valley 1017 km, 13:87 km/h

In and out pit stop for about 30 minutes. Met and had photographs taken with Heng Ooi Khiang, the only entrant from Singapore.

The journey to Pinjarra was the worst ride of my life. I was unable to negotiate any climb over 2% and had to walk and rest after each for the next 32 km. Unbeknown to me I was on the last climb before Dwellingup and just as I was about to dismount to walk the half kilometre or so to the top I fell off/collapsed and came down with bike on top of me. All I could remember was the awful din as my head hit the ground with that dreadful hollow sound that the helmet makes. It must have taken a few moments for me to realise where I was and when I did all I could here was the swishing of cars at ground level and not knowing direction they were coming from. All I knew was that they weren't slowing down and I needed to get off the road as quickly as possible.

Once off the road I inspected the damage and firstly the bike. Seat was 45 degrees off centre and left

brake handle loose. Fixed them up, then looked at myself as the wounds were starting to sting and the flies congregating. Elbow appeared messy with a lot of embedded road gravel, piece of skin torn from the base of my right thumb and gravel rash between the bottom my nicks and the top of my compression socks on my left leg. Needed fresh clean water to irrigate wounds, had none. Walked the 500 metres to brow of hill and noticed the Dwellingup Cemetery on other side of road. There was a shed in the middle of it and I noticed a water tank. Took the bike over to cemetery and went to the tank to fill water bottle. A gift from the heavens, the sweetest water flowed from the tap. Simon Watt later joked

Fixed the bike then looked at myself as the wounds were starting to sting

"Was I sure it wasn't ground water?" Very funny. Squirted all wounds with this heavenly dew and the proceeded to quench my internal anxiety wounds and then cleansed myself all over. With both bottles topped up I went back to road to restart my ride. Wounds had stopped bleeding now.

The initial adrenalin rush from the fall had subsided and all I wanted to do was sleep. As I prepared to lie down in some leaf litter one of Garry Skeer's squad came past and asked if I was all right. I showed him my scraped elbow and asked him to tell somebody at the next checkpoint that I would like some disinfectant and bandages.

I'm not sure how long I was asleep, maybe ten minutes, when I heard an almighty sound of a vehicle sliding in the gravel near me. I looked up into the bright afternoon sunlight that was filtering through the tree shading me and saw the silhouette of a person with long straggly hair bending over and shouting at me, "What the f—k are you doing lying there like that? You look f—king dead!" I mumbled a few incoherent words and before I knew it he took what appeared to be a tool box from his ute which turned out to be a very decent first aid kit. He then proceeded to pull out all the contents one by one asking what they were for. "Sodium Chloride Solution...irrigation. Betadine, that'll kill germs ,won't it?" I squirted a large amount of the Betadine

on all the broken skin and offered him what was left but he said "Just keep it." He asked where I was off to and I said Pinjarra Tea Rooms to which he replied he was going in that direction and would let them know about me. As a parting gesture he asked if I belonged to all those other bike riders on the road. After I replied yes to his inquiry he continued, "I'll let them know you're back on the bike." And then he disappeared in another hail of gravel and dust.

Within a brief moment of my rescue angel leaving another vehicle pulled up and out flew my second angel Alison who had looking after the Pinjarra checkpoint. In no time she had the wounds covered and my spirits revived and I was ready to roll again.

Control 18: Pinjarra 1137 km, 14:42 km/h

Arrived here still with enough time to finish. Had nice chicken roll as well as cool drinks, which really brightened me up. Alison put new bandages on. Also there was Simon Watt who had seen me earlier along the route. He was unlucky and had to withdraw from the 1200 after he missed a turn and didn't have enough time to complete a 1200. He was subsequently offered the opportunity to complete a 200 brevet and was now near the end of it.

Simon offered to ride with me to the finish, saying that he had plenty of time to complete.

About 60 minutes we set off in the afternoon light and before long we were back on the bike path, direction South Perth. Several times I had to stop and stretch my battered legs. Each time I offered an apology to Simon for holding him up. Each time he replied, "It's all right Malcolm, I've got time besides mine's only a two hundred and I can do that anytime. It's more important for you to finish your 1200." I was truly glad to see the lights of Perth City and by the time we reached the bowling club I was well and truly done.

Control 19: South Perth 1220 km, 13.76 km/h, 88h 40m

Nick was there to sign us in and with a quizzical look said to Simon, "You know you only had five minutes to spare." I really felt awful thinking that if he had not finished, it would have been my fault. Again Simon explained, "It's alright, I knew what I was doing." Thank-you Simon, I'm really grateful.

A wonderful cycling holiday

From: Heng OK
Date: Mon, Oct 18, 2010 at 11:40 AM
Subject: Re: Perth Albany Perth 2010
To: Perth Albany Perth

Dear Nick,

It was my first visit to Perth and my first participation in a 1200km Audax. It proved to be a wonderful week of cycling holiday. Due to my inexperience and inadequate preparation, it was a little tough for me, especially on the third day. But still it was an unforgettable, and to some extent, a life-changing experience.

I thought the route was well-planned, with lots of variations in terms of terrain; from bike paths to country roads and small sections of dirt roads. The route brought us to many scenic and historical places which I wished I could stay a little longer at each. The weather was fantastic, though a little too cold for me in the night.

There was no regret that I couldn't complete the distance on the third day, as I came to realize I had achieved a few personal best attempts which I wouldn't have thought possible just a few weeks before: the longest distance of cycling in one day (425km), in two day (679km), in 3 day (860km) and in four days (1072km). In addition, I even did longest duration of cycling without sleep (i.e., 24 hours on the first day). Wow! That was a lot to brag about for some time.

I'm sure a lot of effort has been into the planning of this event. I would like to thank you and all your team members & volunteers for making it such a memorable event. They all had done a great job, supporting all the eighty plus enthusiastic riders, stretching over long distances and time. I'm personally touched by the commitment, helpfulness and friendliness of your team members.

Nick, you and your team had got me hooked onto Audax riding and made me want to come back for more. You can pre-register me for the next PAP, and I'm determined to complete the whole course the next time round.

Best regards,

Heng Ooi Kiang

P.S. Thanks Ronnie for the loan of two pieces of clothing which kept me out of the cold. I apologize for forgetting to return a cap which I borrowed from an official-in-charge (so sorry I couldn't remember the name, probably my mind was in a frozen state that night) at Alexander Bridge.



a

Perth–Albany–Perth

I have always wanted to see Perth. The Perth-Albany-Perth 1200 seemed an added reason for heading way across the country. So I booked in for the ride, and bought a non-refundable return air ticket.

**"YOU'RE JUST
DESPERADOS CRYIN'
IN THE RAIN"***

Chris Rogers

A number of my mates were also going over, so added enthusiasm all round. For a whole lot of reasons the wheels fell off my bike over winter, and I felt way under-prepared as October neared. I decided on three scenarios: a triumphant finish to PAP, finish *hors délai*, or a darn good holiday.

So I ended up in Perth Central YHA with my mate Kevin Ware two days before the start of the ride reassembling our bikes beside the swimming pool. The next day we went for a test ride to the starting point and out along the path checking the first 20 km of the route. We met and chatted with lots of other PAP riders on their bikes during the day.

On the Monday afternoon before the ride there was a meeting of riders in the park in South Perth to pick up paperwork and ride clothing, check lighting, and share a barbie and yarn.

On the Tuesday at 5 am we heard a stirring speech from Nick Dale, Organiser, and were away. There was a 20 km "neutral zone" as we were led out of Perth along the bikepath by local riders. By this time the pack had broken up into many smaller groups, and Kevin, Dave Ellis and I were resoundingly last.

It was bike path almost all the way to the first checkpoint in Mandurah. It was good not having to worry about cars, but off the sealed path the ground was very sandy, and almost impossible to steer a bike on. Coming over a slight rise we saw a small knot of riders a kilometre ahead. My heart sank when I could see the reflection of a silver space blanket being unfurled. Kerry-Ann had come to grief when a touch of wheels in a group had sent her off the path and onto the ground. An ambulance had been called, and Michael was doing all the right things,

so after giving all the encouragement we could we continued on.

The first checkpoint in a rotunda by the shore in Mandurah in the sunshine had a really lovely cheery feel. By now the wind was rising. Not a lot of joy in the prospect of a 428 km leg heading almost due south into a rising southerly. But we didn't feel good, we felt great. I loved the sections of bike path along the coast near Mundarah



Chris cruising the Mandurah Boardwalk

and again near Bunbury. Dave was magnificent as Head Navigator in all these sections, and we didn't put a wheel in the wrong direction.

But by Bunbury Dave was starting to suffer. He had come down with a chest infection a few days before the start of the ride, and was finding the riding into the head wind hard going. We were able to regroup at the Busselton checkpoint at 240 km just on dusk,

where Linda, Robyn and Andrew looked after us nicely.

Twenty or so kilometres out of Busselton the undulations started, and like a naughty boy they got worse and worse. But the wind seemed to be dropping, as did the temperature. We teamed up with Martin McDaniel for this section, and headed into Margaret River as a loose group. I probably know more about Margaret River from reading wine labels than I learned riding through it. It was awfully dark, but the control in town was cosy with a hot cuppa and plate of chili beans that fired us up for the next section.

The Alexandra Bridge checkpoint in the hall at about 330 km was a joy. A warm spot, cheery volleys, a full three course meal, and a couple of sangers for the road. What more could one want? The 330 km mark on an Oppy is usually bedtime, and half a dozen riders were tucked up asleep at the back of the hall. Dave joined them, planning to sleep for an hour or two, then ride into Pemberton. But Kevin, Martin and I headed off into the night. I was getting tired by now, and we pulled over for a power nap after 40 or so kilometres. We rode through the dawn for the second time on the first leg. I really enjoyed this section through the forested areas.

We pulled into the Pemberton checkpoint at 425 km at 7:15 am, after a little over 26 hours on the road, and just over two hours ahead of the clock. Kev always likes a shower before sleeping, but I went straight to bed, asking Helen to wake me after an hour and a half. This is probably the longest sleep I have ever had on a 1200 km ride, and after a good breakfast we were ready to head off. I really liked the feel of this checkpoint. Everyone was happy and cheery, and as I was coming in a lot of my mates were heading out,

* J Ritchie, 2010

and we all said lots of encouraging things to each other.

Day two to Albany was always going to be hard: only 250 km, but quite hilly, and with a mischievous head wind a lot of the day. In Victoria I am used to the long climbs up Buffalo, or Hotham, or to Falls Creek, but then the reward of a nice cruise along the plateaux. But in the hilly sections through Shannon National Park were up, down, up, down, up, down...making it hard for me to get a nice rhythm going. The saving grace was the magnificent timber in the forest, and the company of other riders doing it as hard as we were.

The last hill before Walpole was a killer. Perhaps it was because it was the steepest climb of the day. Perhaps it was because we were tired. Seeing speeds of 6 km/h on the computer is depressing. But up and over, and down the other side, and things picked up. Ever-cheery Linda and Andrew in Walpole were a joy to behold. Kev and I had a chocolate milkshake, latte and serve of wedges at the cafe, and the world looked better.

For the rest of the day there were certainly undulations, but the gradients were much more manageable. Kevin and I, and the two lowdown riders Peter Mathews and Simon Watt headed off together. After several kilometres we came across a group of riders doing it hard. Pat Lehane was quite ill, and Caroline Williams was really suffering from the cold. We had a whip around to share some spare clothing with Caroline and then we all headed off. Pat's condition deteriorated, and Stephen Chambers waited with him till he could be picked up. Caroline wilted, and Gareth rode with her to Denmark. Peter had strained a muscle on the last hill into Walpole and was in strife, so Kevin and I rode with him into Denmark. We were all a bit subdued at the checkpoint.

After Denmark Kevin started to fade. He and Kerry had returned from a three week trip to China just a few days before the ride, so he had missed out on some serious last-minute training, and was understandably tired. We tried a power nap, but after riding on a few kilometres he was starting to fall asleep on the bike. So for safety's sake he decided it best to withdraw and get picked up and taken to Albany.

So I was alone on the road. The trouble was that Kevin had been Head

Navigator, and I had been enjoying the scenery. I wasn't sure I even had the route notes. So I decided to follow all signs to Albany, and hope for the best. Out on a lonely road in the early hours of the morning a motor cycle pulled up beside me, and a bloke said "Should have turned right back there." Did this really happen? Well I went back and turned where I should have, and was overjoyed when I came across Stephen Chambers on the road. He and Kirsty had been in Albany on a holiday some years ago, and he thought he knew how to get to the checkpoint. So once again I rode along enjoying the scenery.

I had a one hour sleep in Albany. That's two sleeps in a bed on one 1200, another record. After a good breakfast Stephen and I headed off into the dawn. An odd grumble-bum may have

Twenty or so kilometres out of Busselton the undulations started, and like a naughty boy they got worse and worse.

moaned about

"gratuitous hills" with the early morning climb up Mt Clarence, but I loved it. The seascape was so beautiful in the early morning light.

Day three was pure pleasure for me. Well sort of. The Albany Road was my first experience with road-trains. There was not too much traffic on the road, so they were not a real concern after I got used to them. I could hear them coming, and got off the road when two trucks would pass each other beside me.

One thing I like about 1200 km rides is that although the faster riders finish each day hours before I ever can, we tend to leave at much the same time each morning, so we get to say G'day as they as they pass me again. All morning I got lots of cheery G'days. I loved the checkpoint in the Stirling Ranges picnic area. Lots of happy people coming and going, and a lovely sit in the shade and a cuppa with Gareth and Caroline.

The Stirling Ranges National Park was a delight with the hills green after the winter rain. The wildflowers were superb, with hakeas, grevilleas and banksias blooming a treat. I got off my

bike and strolled through the bush. I arrived at the Gnowangerup checkpoint only 15 minutes before the cut off, but there were half a dozen other riders there. Stephen Chambers came in right on the cut off, and we rode together for the rest of the day.

Katanning seemed to take forever to arrive. The checkpoint was in a laundromat, and Stephen and I had a power nap on the floor before heading off. Some people grade checkpoints by the number of Michelin stars on the menu, but near midnight a cheery face and helpful concern count for more than a caviar and truffle sandwich.

So we headed off to Wagin. This is when things started to go awry. Serious tiredness started to descend. My eyes were stinging, and I could hardly keep them open. Stephen seemed to be in better shape than me. I needed a power nap badly. It seemed better to

ride at our own pace to the next checkpoint. For Stephen to rest when I needed to, then me rest when he needed to, then Stephen rest...is not smart riding, time losses are compounded, and to delay a needed rest can be downright dangerous. So we leapfrogged several times.

My Schmidt headlight has good peripheral lighting, and as I rode down the middle of the road it would suddenly catch trees on the side of the road. I started hallucinating big time. The trees seemed to be galloping horses riding with me. I belted out The Ride of the Valkyrie at top voice. I was glad nobody could hear me. It was time for another power nap.

Stephen and I arrived in Wagin at pretty much the same time, and found the Big Ram with five minutes to spare. With around 50 km to go to Williams and a bed and breakfast it would have been silly to go on. We would probably have gone astray, and could not have survived on stolen power naps. I asked the Good Volleys if someone had an old tarp or horse blanket we could have slept under. Someone said "No, but there is an Audax bloke staying in room 2 at the motel. Why don't you knock on the door and see if you can sleep on the floor". At 4 am? But we did, and a sleepy Audax rider opened the door, and recognising desperation, let us in, even giving up his own bed so that Stephen could sleep in it.

That one hour of deep sleep really saved the day for me. I was able to ride

straight through to Williams, and arrived one minute before the nominal cutoff time. Ronnie and Meredith fed me up on milk and baked beans, and I felt a million dollars. Well, thrupence ha'penny anyway. Stephen was not far behind me.

Kevin was well rested by now, and was keen to ride the last 200 km brevet into Perth. We headed off together. I needed two serious power naps in the next hour, but was all right after that. The day was becoming quite hot, and the undulations were getting serious.

The section between Marradong and Dwellingup was the low point of the ride for me. It was hot. The road surface was freshly laid coarse screenings. Cars coming up behind seemed to be screaming at me. The shoulder was loose buckshot gravel, so it was impossible to steer back onto the bitumen if forced off it. And the road went up, down, up down... There were these dumb signs PJ 45, PJ 40, PJ 35. Pyjamas? Pajero? Wahhh, it's 25 km to Pinjarra checkpoint in 90 minutes, and I'm averaging 17 km/h and wrecked? It ain't gunna happen in these hills. But Kevin and I belted it out, and mercifully there was a glorious downhill from Dwellingup, and we made it to the tearooms with 15 minutes to spare. It was a glorious checkpoint.

Kev said that it was only 80 km of bikepath to go in five hours. We should be able to find a servo for a nice latte on the way. It didn't work out that way. We had to ride for all we were worth. In the dark I couldn't read my computer, but every now and then a light on the parallel freeway would give a glimpse. Instead of the 5 km I was sure we had gone it was really only 0.6 km since I last looked, and we were riding at 17 km/h. Forget the latte. With 20 km to go Kev stopped and said we had to eat. My mouth was dry and I couldn't swallow. He told me to have a power gel. He looked at me and said "No, better have two". Well it did the trick. I was off like a rabbit with Kevin hanging on. Five kilometres out, and 30 minutes to go. Then I blew it. I missed a turnoff, and went up and over the bridge over the Swan, and into the wilds of the North Shore. The lights of Perth were not where they should have been. I stopped and sank into the slough of despond. "We have to retrace" I wailed. "No", said Kev, "I think I've got it. Follow me." I just chased his red light, and punched air when I recognised Mill Point Road. We got to the Bowls Club with 14 minutes to spare, and went in to thunderous applause. Kevin finished his 200 km brevet with two minutes to spare. Lanterne Rouge again? No, one of the greatest thrills of the ride was to see my mate Tim Taylor come in five minutes after us. Yeahhhhhhhh Tim!

It was a wonderful ride. Nick did a superb job putting it all together. Having been there, done that, I know the hundreds of hours he would have put into bringing it all together. When people ask what the greatest factor in success is on long rides I usually tell them it is just luck. I certainly had my share of it on this ride. But a greater factor is really the vollies. If it weren't for their cheerful support at every one of the checkpoints I would probably still be out there. It is not fair to single anyone out, but I must mention Wayne Hickman. At moments of trial he always seemed to know when appear on his motorbike to say something encouraging. He was always there. And then Kevin of course. Without him it would have been a awful lot harder and lonelier.

A triumphant finish? Noun OK. Not sure about the adjective.



Wayne Hickman, Hari Goonattillake and Alison McLernon at sign in



Rus Hamilton (Vic) and John Morris (USA/NZ) chatting on the way to Bunbury



Martin Fahjje (USA) strikes out on his own



Leigh Patterson, Pepe Ochoa, Diva Gangeshan, and Jens Balchen

A band of slightly out-of-the-ordinary gentlemen?

Barry Moore

Two of the things I love about Audax are the international dimension and the people it throws you in contact with.

I had managed to cobble together just enough riding to justify the excursion to the west for an attempt on PAP. I had organised a flight but had made only preliminary enquiries about accommodation when I received an email from Mark Thomas. Mark is the main organiser of the Cascade 1200, owned a bike shop in Seattle (until recently) and is immediate past president of Randonneurs USA. He has previously been out to Australia twice for the Great Southern Randonee 1200 (a failure, then a success).

Mark wanted to know whether I wanted to share an apartment with him and anybody else he could trap. Nick Dale then intervened. Clearly, he had too little to do as organiser of PAP and saw the need to also organise the accommodation. The result was that we had a comfortable apartment for six, rather than the four initially intended by Mark.

It was a slightly odd collection, but very Audax.

Mark has recently sold the bike shop and thinks he may soon have to get a job. In the meantime, he seems to be close to the ideal of most Audax riders as he is nearly a full-time cyclist. This trip should fix itself into Mark's memory as he had his 50th birthday here.

Greg Courtney is Professor of Entomology (and some other things) at Iowa State University. As well as his cycling, both Greg and his wife are marathon runners. Greg will be in Australia for about three months, based loosely in Canberra with CSIRO. From there, he will make forays into mountainous areas of Victoria, Tasmania, NSW, ACT and New Zealand in search of insects in mountain streams. A tough gig but somebody has to do it. An initial disappointment of the trip was that Greg had been unable to find a marathon for his wife to run in Australia in November.

Spencer Klassen is a hospital pharmacist from Kentucky. He is tall and barrel-chested, always with a grin on his face and a twinkle in his eye. He wears a jersey with 'Fixie' emblazoned across the front but it was not until I looked more closely at his bike that I realized he was riding one in the 1200. It did not seem to slow him down.

Spencer brought his son Henno (Henry) with him. Henno would be about 12 years old and did seem to enjoy his overseas trip with dad, although we worried that he was not drinking his share of the beer with dinner. Henno travelled with the



Henno assisting Ronnie McInnes with support tasks

support and was given some key tasks, like getting us over the footbridge near Bussellton.

We all arrived on the Friday before the ride but Garry Wall just squeaked in, turning up near midnight. Garry is a winemaker from near Milawa. He attempted the 2007 PBP after only six months of Audax riding, which proved to be a poor choice given the weather conditions that year. Garry made it to Loudéac on the way back but could not continue.

There were lots of other Audax riders in the Quest on Arlington apartment

complex and we quickly adopted Peter Donnan and Leigh Paterson into our group. Peter was particularly important as he was happy to organise us as well as himself. This was a useful characteristic as the rest of us were far too laid back to organise anything.

As well as the pre-ride dinner, we managed to get out to a couple of excellent restaurants within walking distance of Quest and had a lovely and relaxed ride to Fremantle for a delightful coffee and pastry. For breakfast, we would walk 100 metres down the road to the bookshop café and indulge ourselves.

Discussions were varied, as you would expect. We did manage to convince the Americans of that crazy theory that zip ties on the helmet are a magpie deterrent. Who'd have thought they would be that silly! Everybody in Australia knows that the zip ties are for communicating with Martians.

Our strategy of lots of relaxation broken only by some fairly serious eating and less-serious drinking was successful as we all finished the ride. Mark, Spencer and Greg rode in a group from the US. I did have a word to them in Albany about coming half way around the world and forming a peloton of compatriots. This may be why they let Peter Donnan join them on the last day. They finished around 4.30 pm. Garry and I came in after 7 pm so missed dinner with the group.

Nearly a quarter of the entries for PAP were from overseas. Is this an Australian record?

One of my abiding memories of PAP will be a very laid back time with this slightly eclectic group. Oh yeah, and it was also a great bike ride. Thanks to Nick and his many helpers.

0 to 1200 in 4.5 Months

Damian Bramanis

I've decided to attempt riding 100 miles in a day. It seems a scary and unachievable goal, something that other people would do. Am I even capable of riding that far?

I haven't done any long-distance cycling before, and I'm not really sure how I'll go. I have ridden 100 km twice before—once last year, and once the year before. I ride to work, and I figure if I can ride the 20 km to work, then surely I can ride 100 miles, since it's just doing the same thing a few times over. Looking back a few months later, my experience with long-distance riding has been a great one, but I know now that there is a lot I have got to learn.

Sunday, May 23, 2010: My first long-distance ride

Last night I planned to get my bike ready for the big ride, but I ended up staying out late with friends, had a few drinks and didn't get home 'til after midnight. I only got about three hours sleep and didn't have any time to prepare my bike, which is really worrying me. Mechanically, everything is fine, but the bike is still set up for commuting: full front and rear racks, some very heavy 40-spoke tandem wheels, a bag on the front and a big box up the back. By the time I woke up it was too late to strip all the weight off, so I make sure the tyres are pumped up and decide that riding the bike heavy is better than not riding at all.

During the week, I used Google Maps to draw up a route that stretches to the four "corners" of Perth. It is 329 km of flat roads. Unfortunately my printer wasn't working, so I just wrote down the key turns and main roads on a scrap of paper. I feel like a map would be useful, but it really is the least of my concerns. I wonder what sort of food are you supposed to bring on a long-distance ride? I don't really know, so I throw a box of muesli bars and a bag of jubes in my handlebar bag, and fill three bottles with water.

It's just before 5 am, and the bike and rider are as ready as they'll be today. The weather is gusty and windy, and surprisingly cold. I set out with a trepidation that melts away after the first few kilometres...all I can do now

is keep turning the pedals around. When I remember to eat, I have a few jubes or a muesli bar, and when I remember to drink I have a sip from the bottle. The rain comes and goes (nine times in all) as the distance slowly rolls past. About 100 km in I realise that I'm feeling pretty good, so I pedal harder to get some real speed up, and ignore that little voice reminding me of the 200 km+ to come. All is going surprisingly well at 130 km in, and I stop for an early lunch and a short siesta.

After lunch, I start to feel the pain of distance without preparation. It is a feeling which will become more familiar to me over the next few months. At 150 km the saddle is feeling more

persevere, and so does the pain, as I get to 300 km at 14 hours, 20 minutes. The last 29 km is pretty sore indeed, and pretty slow, but I get back home and finish at 8.45 pm. This made it 15 hours 58 minutes start to finish, doing 329 km, and I would guess I spent about 14 hours on the bike.

Once home, my body protests. I get very cold, and begin shaking uncontrollably. I'm hungry, I'm tired, and I'm in pain, and I need to deal with all of these things at once. The ride was a success, however. For the first time ever I have ridden 100 miles in a day, and to top that off I've gone even further and hit 200 miles.

As the pain slowly fades over the



Nervous moments before the start, lining up with endurance athletes and their gleaming machines

than a little uncomfortable, but I still have energy and think I'm going well. By 200 km the saddle was genuinely painful, and I feel like I can't go much further, pulling over at 230 km to get a coffee and rest. At this point all I can feel is the pain, which is a big problem, and I'm seriously considering stopping. In the end, I decide my legs still have some power left in them and I figure I can just spend more time out of the saddle and less time sat down. I

following days, I begin to wonder if 329 km is my limit, or if I could ride further...

Sunday, September 12, 2010: My first Audax ride

The last weeks of winter are behind us, riding weather is back, and I've just joined Audax Australia. Today is my first Audax ride, and it will be the first time I've ever ridden with a club. To be honest, I'm a little nervous. I don't know

Photo: Hans Dusink

the etiquette for riding in a group, and the brevet card is an entirely confusing concept: you mean I just walk up to people in the street, and ask them to sign it?

I've come along to Mr. Marston's Meander, a 200 km ride through the West Australian wheatbelt. Some last-minute bike repairs mean that my chain is rubbing, no matter which gear is selected. This turns out to be more and more annoying throughout the day! As soon as we reach the first hill, the group splits up, and I find myself riding alone. However, it's not too far down the road and I catch up with a few riders who have stopped for a short break. Here I meet Tony and Perry, two Audax members who have a lot of rides under their belts. It's great to hear some hints and tips, plus a few great stories from some experienced riders, and makes a really nice change from travelling solo all of the time.

Somewhere around lunch time, I get lost and overshoot York by a few kilometres. I keep going for a bit, and then turn back, and then start to get utterly lost. I get instructions from a friendly lady in her front yard, who sends me across a rope bridge and into town. This detour costs me a little time, but I end up finishing the 200 km in just under 10 hours, and get my brevet card signed by the chain-smoking lady who runs the video shop.

My first Audax ride is a success!

Mid September: Disaster strikes

I have been planning to ride another Audax ride or two in September, but I get hit by sickness that takes away my fitness and my health for a few weeks. Firstly, it is food poisoning after a nasty meat pie, and I am knocked out for three days and unable to eat or drink anything. This leads into a chesty cough, with achy joints and a raging headache which persist for another two weeks. Feeling pretty woeful, and clawing my way out of that, I discover that I have been struck with hayfever for the first time ever, and this year's high pollen levels are an itchy, runny nuisance. I discover that it's easier to lose your fitness than it is to build it.

Tuesday, October 4, 2010: The Perth–Albany–Perth 1200

It is 4.30 am, and I have just ridden an anxious 19.5 km to get to the start line of the Perth–Albany–Perth 1200 km Randonee. The ride should have



The view from the top of Mt Clarence is magnificent

calmed my nerves, but I am worried; my seatpost snapped on Friday, and I've repaired it but the new one doesn't feel quite the same. I should have reduced the weight of my bike, but I'm still lugging around these bomb-proof tandem wheels, racks and mudguards. Why don't I have anywhere to clip my route sheet? I've still got a nasty cough, and don't feel 100 percent. I hope I packed everything I need in my drop-bag; and is there somewhere to charge my lights overnight?

I am surrounded by endurance athletes who have prepared long and hard, with their gleaming machines tested by countless turns of the cranks. I haven't participated in any sport in my life, and I'm here with my pot belly, and

my trusty old steel-framed commuter. Somebody's GPS tracker gives a clinical beep as it logs the location of the start line. I glance around and notice that there are a few GPS around, and everybody else has got bike computers...do I need a bike computer? I look down at my handlebars and self-consciously give my rust-stained oversized novelty 'ding-dong' bell a quick polish. And clothes: everybody is wearing special cycling clothes, like jerseys with those pockets at the back, and arm warmers and leg warmers. I'm wearing a red polyester t-shirt that my mum gave me for Christmas a few years ago. There is a quiet tension in the air. Or perhaps just in the pit of my stomach. I feel like I'm out of my league.

And I am out of my league. I realise this about three minutes into the ride, when I immediately rocket to the back of the group. For most of the participants on the PAP, the last time I ever see them was as they whip past me in these first few minutes. I have an embarrassingly simple ride plan: take it easy on day one, then take the rest as it comes. For a short while I consider trying to stick with the pack, but if I do that then I've got no ride plan at all.

I'd like to imagine that I pedalled like the wind, hour after hour, kept high spirits, and made great time...but the truth is that it was a struggle the whole way. By the time I reached Bunbury (181 km) punctures had left me with only one spare tube, I had been riding solo most of the way, fighting the wind, and was very disheartened to be arriving just as the volunteers were packing up. Lunch did terrible things with my stomach, and I had to slow down and fight to stay moving with the nausea. My paperclip from the office was fine at holding the route sheet on my handlebars, that is, until a truck drove past and it would go skittering across the road. I stopped counting after the 20th time I had to stop to recover it. The really annoying thing was a loose bolt for my mudguards, which grew louder as the day progressed.

I leave Busselton (239 km) with a small group of riders, and the route soon turns inland and starts to touch some hills. Having never ridden with a group before, I realise that my weight is a big disadvantage. On the way up every hill, I drop off the back of the group because I can't keep up, and then on the way downhill I need to ride the brakes so I don't go tearing past them (recumbent riders, I understand your pain!) As the sun sets, the temperature starts to drop and the headlights come on. I realise two things. Firstly, everybody has clear glasses, and I have the option to either wear my sunglasses (can't see in the dark) or take them off (eyes full of stinging, hurty bugs). Secondly, everybody has arm warmers and leg warmers (why don't I!?) The night rolls on, and so does the bike, and this whole long-distance cycling idea loses its appeal. The pain of long rides comes flooding back, and my bum is barking at me with bruises and chafing. I follow my ride plan to take it easy on day one, and stop for the night in Alexandra Bridge (333 km) as most of the riders continue on. A hot meal and



Damian on his way to a 20-minute nap

a couple of hours sleep, and I'll wake up with new legs. As I curl up in bed it hits me that I've just set a new personal best of 333 km.

I wake up to the promise of new legs and peanut butter sandwiches. On the bright side, Colin made me some peanut butter sandwiches which were wonderful. However, I was very disappointed to discover that I woke up with exactly the same legs I went to bed on. I get outside, and onto my bike, and it is nearly zero degrees. The next 90 km is spent wishing for a visit from the arm-warmer fairy and the leg-warmer elves. I am also convinced that there will be a hot coffee somewhere soon, and I anxiously look for it around each bend. The coffee is a myth, however, so I continue to struggle up the hills through the most majestic, stunningly beautiful countryside of the ride. I reach Pemberton just in time, as the control is closing and most of the riders are gone. The uphill sections are hurting me, and a few minutes later I know I have to get back on the bike to hit the next set of hills.

Hour after hour, hill after hill, I drag 130 kg of man and machine along the road. I count down the kilometres as I pass each road sign, with disbelief at how far there is to go. Everything hurts—my butt, my arms, my hands, my feet, my knees—and my spirits are low. I've never had to climb like this before. By the time I reach Walpole, it's been 222 km of tough terrain without a meal and I am very hungry, and ready to quit. The Walpole bakery is closing, but the friendly man behind the counter offers me the second-last meat pie, and turns back on the coffee machine that

he's just cleaned. I gobble it all down happily, and sit at the side of the road.

The next few hours are a blur, as I pedal through the evening and into the night, and get into Albany (679 km) in the early hours of the morning. The last few kilometres I was so sore that wasn't able to sit, but I'm glad that I can finally get into bed to rest up for tomorrow. Today, I've just ridden 346 km, and broken yesterday's personal best.

I wake up after a couple of hours sleep, and most of the other riders are long gone. I am physically unable to sit on the saddle. It's only five kilometres to the top of Mount Clarence, anyone can ride five kilometres I tell myself... so I ride it standing up (well, I walk the steep bits). The view from the top is magnificent, and I want to stay there as I gingerly lower myself down on the saddle to continue the ride. I find a way to sit down, and force my body to keep riding despite its screams of protest.

It's 150 km through the Stirling Ranges, and into the wheatbelt, where sleep deprivation wins out. I'm too tired to ride any more. The hint from a rider I met earlier was to have a 20-minute power nap, which sounds like a good idea right about now. Lying down at the side of the road, I am soon woken up by a worried truck driver who thought I had been knocked off my bike by a car. I reassure him that I'm just having a nap, and get back to sleep. A couple of minutes later, a teenage girl comes running from her car, shouting and asking if I'm okay. Again, I let her know that I'm just having a nap, and a third driver pulls up in his ute to see if he can help. I get back to sleep a third time, and am

woken up by a truckie shouting down at me from the driver's seat.

Giving up on the idea of a 20-minute power nap, I hop back on the bike, making the Gnowangerup control (830 km) with four minutes to spare. From here, the pain is unbearable and I can't sit any more, so I either have to pull out, or ride standing up. It's only 61 km to the next control, so I decide to ride it standing up. It turns out that your pace picks up if you ride without using the saddle, but your body gets worse very quickly. I make good time, but pull into Kattanning (891 km) with knees, feet and ankles screaming in agony. After resting at the control for too long, my right ankle has swollen up worryingly. I can't walk on it, or put any weight on the pedal without a sharp piercing pain. It's only 56 km to the next control, so I decide to ride it with only my left leg. The ride is agony, as I have no way to lift my body weight from the saddle, and every one or two kilometres along the road I roll to a stop in the gravel and scream silently for a minute before starting off again.

I don't make it all the way to the next control, the pain is too great and I physically cannot go on after 46 km. At 67 hours 50 minutes, and 937 km, I withdraw from the ride, disappointed, and in a lot of pain. Later, the doctor tells me that my Achilles tendon will be okay, but if I'd done any more riding it would have likely caused a serious injury.

The days following the PAP, I can't believe the toll it has taken. My body takes its time to heal and recover, and it is quite a while before I just catch up on sleep and feel myself again. On doctor's orders, I'm not allowed to ride my bike for a week. Although, as soon as seven days are over I'm back in the saddle, doing a few shorter rides.

Now: In hindsight

Looking back over the past few months, starting out with long-distance cycling has been an amazing time, but the Perth-Albany-Perth blew me away as a singularly phenomenal experience. Over three days, I've set and broken personal bests, hitting 333 km in one day, then hitting 346 km in a day, and then reaching 937 km as my longest ride ever. I've pushed myself further than I've ever done before, both physically and mentally, and I've come out the other side a stronger person. If I could speak to myself back in May this year, I'd say go for it, see how far you can

ride—and then I think I'd give myself these hints:

- **Maps:** Make sure you carry a map, as you will get lost, and you won't always appreciate the extra distance.
- **Take it slow:** Build up to longer distances. Try to ride a little bit further than you rode last time, don't just try to ride crazy distances and expect it to be fun. If you attempt to ride any distances that are far further than you've gone before, it will hurt. A lot.
- **Bike computers and other gadgets:** You don't need them. The less you have, the more fun cycling is.
- **Alcohol:** Don't drink the night before a big ride. Just don't.
- **Sleep:** Cycling well requires you sleeping well. Start a big ride well rested, and try to keep ahead of time (ha!) so you can have more than two hours sleep a night.
- **Weight:** Lose weight man! Dragging 130 kg up each hill isn't fun. At least strip some weight off your bike, and carry as little as possible.
- **Eating:** See above. You know how to eat properly already.
- **Water:** If you're riding solo, keep your water topped up, and look out for places where you can refill before your bottles are empty.
- **Energy:** You'll have good spots and bad spots. If you're in a bad spot, slow down a little, eat something and drink something, and then set yourself a goal to keep riding for 45 minutes. You will feel better. If you're in a good spot, don't pedal hard like an idiot and burn all of your energy.
- **Riding with others:** It's great to chat with other riders. If you can, make sure you spend some time at the front of the group. If you can't, spend some time at the front of the group anyway and give it your best.
- **Clothes:** Get some arm warmers and leg warmers. And some of those glasses with clear lenses.
- **Bike:** Pfffft, your bike is fine. People were doing long-distance cycling 100 years ago, on bikes and roads far worse than yours.

2011 Polka Dot Tours

ride France at your own pace

PDT PreBPB Avignon>Lyon

8th August 2011–15th August 2011

8 Days

Polish your preparation for Paris Brest Paris riding classic climbs like Mont Ventoux, Alpe d'Huez, Col du Galibier, & Col de Madeleine; while overnights at altitude, then top things off with a couple of longer undulating rides.

Starting two weeks before BPB means there is time to get your head around cycling in France, while experiencing touristic and cycling heights. Hotel to hotel routes encourage riding at your own pace, with luggage transport and mechanical support. The PreBPB tour start in Avignon and finish in Lyon are a fast train (TGV) ride from Paris.

PDT Classic Annecy>Pau

30th June 2011–10th July 2011

11 Days

Ride the classic climbs in the Alpes, Provence & the Pyrenees. (Maximum 15 riders)

PDT Tour de France Paris>Paris

12th July 2011–24th July

13 Days

See Tour de France highlights with time to enjoy cycling in France. (maximum 20 riders)

PDT Classic Annecy>Pau

26th July 2011–5th August 2011

11 Days

Ride the classic climbs in the Alpes, Provence & the Pyrenees. (Maximum 15 riders & non riders)



Peter: 04 1733 5366

Warren: 04 1705 2589

bikeNOW trading as the Polka Dot Tour

www.polkadottour.com.au

PDT2011 Sept 1/10