

Demons Days in D'Aguilar

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“Scenic tour before lunch at Kilcoy and tea at Glenview, then it’s all flat back to Banyo,” or so the flyer said—it didn’t say anything about what was lurking out in the hills and flats...

Three hardy souls turned up for the ‘scenic tour’: Martin Pearson and his son James (who I later found out is often coerced into these rides) and myself showed at the Banyo library near the Banyo railway station on Brisbane’s North to sign up, get the lights checked, and get on our way. I met Lindsay and Connie Green who were organising the ride. This was my first 300 and voiced my uncertainty about my capacity to complete it as, after my carbon-alloy road bike met its demise in a recent car-bike interface, I was on a hybrid. Even though advertised as unsupported Sandy Vigar was also along for the journey. After being encouraged that it ‘wasn’t that bad’, making final unnecessary adjustments to my bike and a bit of chat we were on our way. There’s nothing like starting out feeling confident.

Leading out at the front I knew riding with Martin (who is like a cycling god around these parts) and James who had 20 years on me that it wouldn’t be long before I resumed my normal position of ‘tail-end Charlie’. On the climbs up to the Dayboro Road I got dropped like a hot scone. Martin courteously waited at the top of the first climb, however on the next he and James opted for their own pace and I was left to my own devices. I was pretty happy with this as then I don’t feel pressured to ride at someone else’s speed, can stop when I want to and I don’t mind my own company.

Coming into Dayboro to the first checkpoint I opted for a bottle refill and kept moving while Martin and James enjoyed the company of Sandy and some bakery treats. I had ridden down the ‘easy’ side of Mt Mee a couple of times and had forgotten that it was a long way up to the top. As I passed the Mt Mee 25 km sign I found myself secretly thankful for the triple chain ring on the hybrid and commenced the grind up the hill.

During the recent flooding there were a number of road areas washed

out that had traffic lights reducing the road to one lane on the way up and to prevent a head on with a car on the way down when the lights changed, I stayed on the outside of the barriers. The views from this part of the road were spectacular back along to Dayboro and the ranges and so I stopped for a stretch and a drink. James then passed my rest point like a scalded cat powering up the hill with ease. Back on the bike (still in granny gear) I was just pedalling and listening for the

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next motorbike to scream past on the twists and bends. As I noticed the third memorial to a fallen motorcyclist on the grass verges Martin had ridden up behind me and, so he wouldn’t surprise me, said my name, of course I wasn’t expecting that and nearly fell off! As we exchanged pleasantries, I resumed my true and rightful position at the tail end. This was the last contact I had with Martin and James for the rest of the day.

Finally levelling off I had a small downhill and was able to rest my poor backside that had been telling me that this was not fun. More grinds and downhills ensued and as I was in familiar territory now, started to notice some landmarks that told me that the summit was approaching. As the crest was reached a breathtaking vista opened up, showing the Glasshouse mountains in all their majesty, making the climb and the sore butt much more

acceptable. However I still renamed it Mt **** Mee. Across the top of the mountain there are views out to the sea and a large number of tourists were stopped at the main lookout. I rode through the carpark in the vain hope of a tap and, with no luck, I commenced the descent to the D’Aguilar Highway and the next checkpoint at Kilcoy.

I had climbed this hill once on a 25/36 set up and it is an ugly hill: full of twists and pinches with a warning at the bottom of a 1.8 km climb of 15%. From the top though it is blisteringly fast, although with the amount of water running out off the hills some of the corners required additional caution where it flowed onto the road surface. Hitting the bottom there is a sharp, pinchy, stingy little climb that once more had my butt telling me to stop this torture. It was about here that the demons started, the ones in my head that kept telling me to give up. “Use the escape clause it’s only 25 km from here to the train you can go home”. As I arrived in the very small town of D’Aguilar the local shop provided relief from the pain in the butt with some nappy rash cream and I told the demons that we would go to Kilcoy and make a decision there.

After an uneventful run for the next 20 km or so through Woodford and the back way into Kilcoy every stretch had a headwind and on a hybrid this is difficult to overcome. The demons pressed again. Finding the next checkpoint I noted that I was about an hour ahead of the cut off. Sandy had texted me that she was in the local park so I joined her and had one of the rolls I had prepared that morning. We chatted for 15 minutes or so and with 75 km to the next checkpoint explained where the secret checkpoint would be in Peachester. I said goodbye and I and the demons headed off to return to Woodford 40 minutes ahead of minimum time. On the return journey every stretch had a headwind! I couldn’t believe it and found myself railing at

stupid hybrids and Audax and my sore butt and anything else I could think of. In the end I put on the iPod, told myself and the demons to shut up and got on with it.

When the D'Aguilar Highway was reached I turned left and headed towards the next checkpoint. The demons were silent now as they knew that the next chance was about 50 km away and if they stopped motivating me they may win. At the 150 km mark I decided to take five minutes and have a gel and a bar and told myself to drink a whole bidon. I had really concentrated on drinking all day and this was a fortunate stop as there was another 10% climb over the next rise that I wasn't privy to, having never been in this area of the ride.

After 'smashing' (?) the hill (which I renamed Mt **** Mee 2) I was on the final climb into Peachester and managed to drop the chain. Generally I can pick it back up through careful manipulation of the front derailleur but not today. Grumbling about crummy hybrids and triple chain rings saw me fire up again and I found Sandy who, being used to Martin's normal pace and not mine, was just about to come looking for me. I explained I had been out wrestling my demons and she knew what I meant. Bottles recharged and lights and vest on I swapped the iPod for static-riddled AM radio so I could listen to the NRL. Sandy told me that it was all downhill and flat from here so I dubiously went on, straight into a massive long downhill that must have been about 10 km long.

On arrival at the next checkpoint a stroke of luck in the cafe was closing and everything was half price! Salty snacks from the bain-marie and a Coke recharged my batteries and after texts to the bride and Leon Hill who was my Audax moral support for the night, I headed back out onto the road. I have always enjoyed riding at night, there is less distraction and you can find a nice rhythm. The next personal milestone was reached in making it past 204 km as the furthest I had ridden in a single day. I found navigating the increasingly dense instructions difficult as my computer had been out of kilter all day with the directions and mentally calculating the increasing differences was taxing my brain too much. When the distance to the next easily identifiable turn came up I disconnected the speedo and put it in

my back pocket. On reaching said turn I replaced the computer and was right on the distances again. This stretch was down along the Glasshouse Mountains and was steady undulations for the next three hours or so. On the radio the Queensland Reds were smashing the NSW Waratahs so it was a most enjoyable section of the ride, hopefully the same will happen in State of Origin this year.

The final checkpoint manifested itself out of the night and after stocking up on water, Coke and a dubious pie I made a couple of final texts to the support crew. I also rang Lindsay who would be waiting at the last checkpoint for me to get in. Expected ETA at current average was 12-12.30 am.

Back on the bike and less than 200 m up the road I started to shiver and had to pull over and put some more clothes on. While not a cold night the effort of the day was catching up on me. As



Three hardy souls: James, Simon and Martin

the landmarks became more familiar I actually started to think I could do this.

Continuing through the night with a half moon rising over the waters of Deception Bay I started to feel at one with myself. I invited the demons to join me in celebrating our mutual achievement and they were happy to come for the ride even though we headed into an onshore zephyr. At some point along the waterfront some sort of flying creature clattered into my helmet, obviously distracted by my head mounted Ay Up light. I turned to see what it was and saw nothing so it got away as well. Maybe I was travelling so slowly that moths were hanging around my head, and this flying thing was hungry who knows! Crossing the new Hornibrook Bridge I stopped halfway along to apply some of my depleting stock of nappy cream and noticed the wind was freshening. For the next 10 km I battled this ill wind with the demons once again nipping and secretly planning their nasty sting in the tail.

As I rounded onto Toombul Road with about 10 km to go I was hit by this wall of fatigue that seemed as if all I wanted to do was lie in the gutter and sleep. The demons pressed again with malice as I looked at the speedo and the miniscule changes to the distance made it seem a very long way to the end. To stave off the malicious little buggers I made the decision to switch to just the clock and look at the distance again in 15 minutes. This strategy worked as I wasn't watching the distance and time wasn't an issue as I was nearly two and a half hours ahead of the 3 am cut off so I could walk from here and still make it.

The final turn loomed, the speedo was put back on line and I watched with a great feeling of satisfaction as it clocked over to 300 km as Lindsay's car hove into view, demons finally silenced.

As I was coming into the final control I remembered a couple of stories in *Checkpoint* that had recently inspired me: Bindi Pursey and her epic SM1200 and Damian Bramanis' PAP effort. While this ride certainly wasn't of those proportions, it really felt like I am worthy of being a part of this whole Audax caper. Maybe I should have remembered those inspirational stories earlier in the day? (Make mental note here.)

I handed over my brevet card and thanked Lindsay for putting the ride on and meeting me at the end. Effusive in his praise of my ride, particularly on the hybrid, Lindsay thanked me for being 33% of the total participants of the ride and suggested that drop bars are better over this sort of distance. I thought there was a slight twinkle in his eye as he said it, but it must have been a trick of the light from the nearby shops...

We parted in the night as the leftovers of the nightclubs poured out of the trains and wobbled home.

Route map

www.bikely.com/maps/bike-path/April-Animation

After 20 years off the bike Simon started riding again five years ago to get fit and do something for the environment; he has excelled at the second. With a preference for riding alone, he joined Audax Australia in 2009 as he loves riding long distance combined with knowing that coming last still achieves something. He has no facial hair, likes cats, long moonlit walks on the beach and Chinese food. He expects to achieve a maiden Super Randonneur this year.