

Before and during the B-P-B 200km 2015

Before

Looking at the map and route on the Audax calendar, it's an attractive ride. The weather forecast looked a bit dubious but an email from Mark advising reasonable notification to Peter dispelled any thought of not riding. Besides, it was a 7.00 am start!

Which bike to use? Clearly, the one with low gears. Check brakes, tyres, chain and 'bars and stem and lighting configuration. Batteries okay? Yes! Should I fit mudguards? Can't be bothered.

Review checklist for essential items. Double check for emergency telephone numbers, Go card and money. Identify convenient railway stations for use if the weather turns out to be as bad as forecast. Ensure that cycling shoes, helmet and front wheel are in the car. Only forgot my 'Oppy hat, so can't complain.

During

Arrived in plenty of time, assembled bike and signed on. Very happy to see that Peter's face had recovered following his recent cycling mishap. Ann, Mark and Pat had left at 6.30 am but I had Nick's company until the end of Sunwell Street. That suited both of us!

Being familiar with the early route, I sped on until I had reservations I had again gone astray. Several looks at the route sheet reassured me and on I went, noting the several groups on riders going in the opposite direction. I figured out that they were either training or racing but either way I wondered about the preference for dark jerseys, not a wise move in view of the conditions. The rain became positively torrential around Narangba, which was nowhere near where I was supposed to be. I asked a local for the shortest way back to the designated route. He was right and my only delay then was ignoring 'no through road' signs. I always assume that vandals have changed the signposts. Still, the floodways remained unflooded!

The road to Dayboro was not at all pleasant, mainly due to those vehicle drivers, who seemed to regard poor road conditions and heavy rain as a challenge. Admittedly, there were also many drivers who were considerate. It stopped raining at Dayboro and having advised Team Jenkins that I would be late, I had my brevet signed (and stamped) at the bakery and fuelled up.

Happily, I tackled Mount Mee in the dry. I was on my light bike and, more importantly, I was lighter too. A compact chainset means that hills are not the challenge they once were, so all that remained was to enjoy the scenery and the riding styles of the cyclists using Mount Mee for training. It was satisfying to descend Mount Mee in the dry, apart from the car that was determined to hog my back wheel all the way down. I was looking forward to climbing

the reputedly 'nasty pinch' at the bottom, not being familiar with that expression in a cycling context. Well, apparently a 'pinch' is a steep hill.

Having passed through Woodford, the next challenge was the climb to Peachester. Low gears and slow pace made short work of that. It was not raining either. Very shortly, there were Peter and Team Jenkins, with refreshments. Very Welcome! Tempting to spend longer but must get on.

Commissioner Flats Road was fast but the rain had now restarted. It became even heavier on the unsealed section of Cove Road. Fortunately I was going with the flow. The surface was not too uneven but I could have managed without the cattle that shared it with me. They all escaped into the bush, except for one persistent bull that half-wheeled me until it could escape into greener pastures. I convinced myself that the lightning was moving away too.

Back to Woodford and an easy ride to Wamuran. The diversion onto Gamgee Road was a good move, being free of the traffic visible on the main road. It landed me at the Campbells Pocket Road junction, from where it was a big gear romp to the next checkpoint, where I knew Lindsay was waiting. Being me, I sailed past until realising a few kilometres further on that I had missed it. (in fact I heard Lindsay's shout but didn't notice him). However, as I deliberated about the pros and cons of going back, Lindsay arrived and provided the required support, food, drink and encouragement. Back in the saddle, I soon came to the traffic lights at Caboolture, which of course meant retracing to where I should have turned off. No problem, it's all downhill from here. Then came the rain – and more concerning, the lighting. It was getting dark and I was wearing prescription sunglasses, not too useful for reading street signs and following the route sheet.

I know now that I was still on route but visibility and road conditions were atrocious and I wondered if I would have been better advised to institute my railway escape plan back at Caboolture. However, having put up with everything up to now, it was not really an option. Lance Armstrong in the film 'Dodgeball' said to the indecisive star: "if you decide to continue, you may have nothing to regret for the rest of your life". Good message!

It's getting past a joke, pitch black and I am not sure where I am. Then, a beacon -a McDonalds sign, with an opportunity to get shelter, a warm drink and, importantly, directions. Not too bothered about the time, now it's about survival! I am on course and raring to go.

Very happy with my lighting configuration and my high-visibility rain jacket which should tell any motorists daft enough to be out that I am there too. Steady along Deception Bay Road and onto Anzac Avenue but sailed past the Elizabeth Avenue turnoff, which I saw but ignored. I seemed to go on for kilometres to get to the other end of Elizabeth Avenue and

Ted Smout Bridge. I never realised that the road was adjacent to the bikepath, although of course it must be. Darkness gives you an entirely different perspective.

I know where I am now, Left at Nineteenth Avenue into what was Flinders Parade but is now Flinders Creek, then right at Fifteenth Avenue, which is where Peter spotted me and guided me to his residence.

Did I enjoy the ride? Yes, although at times I had my doubts. The support was great and my objectives were satisfied. Apart from the adverse weather conditions, which I suppose are part of the Audax challenge, the differences between Peter's perfectly straightforward route sheet and the route attached to the map on the Audax calendar, confused me. The bad visibility didn't help either. Still, I finished!