

Audax BRM: B-P-B (Brighton - Peacheater - Brighton), 200km

Saturday, 18 November 2017, 06:00

The weather report promises “rain at times”. When I leave home just after 4am it starts raining heavily within a few minutes. I would rather be in bed. I start out tired, wet, and filthy, so I may as well continue as far as I can.

It's the only 200km supported ride in November, so I'm surprised we don't have more registrants. The legend of Ann's coconut and cranberry slice must be a well-guarded secret. We've had a few cancellations overnight, so we start out as a scattered pack of nine riders. Nick, Raoul, Simon, Mark, John, Andrew, Ant, Peter, and myself.*

I've completed a 30km warmup, and so has Andrew, so we know our pace. I usually ride alone, and that's surprisingly easier to do in a larger group. But I try to keep pace with the social bunch as we leave town. I think I scored some points when I heckle them for missing a cue, and dash through ~~a red~~ an amber light, because Ant and Nick are riding my wheel and returning a bit more than I dished out.

I have a good chat with Andrew through the field of transmission towers, and manage to ride straight over the remains of a beer bottle - much to no effect - but we're both staring at my tyre silently for the next minute, waiting for something to happen, as we slowly take the hill.



As we approach Yugar I've slowed enough that the boys aren't waiting for me, and I don't feel like I'm holding anyone back. It's only been a few weeks since I rode this way, but the countryside is much greener. The roads aren't too wet, and you can see distant hills cloaked in grey clouds.

Checkpoint 1 is the Dayboro Bakery. Peter and Ann are filling water bottles from the 50L shower hose in the back of the van. Plus - they've organised an open tab! Bust out the lobster croissants and champagne!

Nick, Ant, Mark, Raoul, and Peter are here and it looks like I was only a few minutes behind. I'm a bit chuffed about that. I inhale a sausage roll, and Ant has enjoyed his cream bun so much he's wearing half of it. Mark chugs a half litre of milk, and apparently I'm the only one dubious about that approach. We're not here long, and Andrew and John arrive shortly after.

I head out with a couple of riders. This is new for me; riding socially and doing a hill together as well. I'm familiar with the roads here, but I've only done them alone. Ant is talking up 'Ocean View' to Nick as a short detour and a must see. The conversation flickers around climbs in the area and absurd courses that try to fit them all in. We start out on the Mt Mee climb as a set of five, but it doesn't last long. When the road for Ocean View appears, Ant gestures toward it as a passing attraction. There's no way we're letting him off that easily.

At the time I felt like I wasn't travelling as fast as I normally do, and I thought the rider in front was lagging. But I managed a PR for the climb in the end, so I'm looking forward to riding up there with seasoned riders again so I can improve and learn some more.

As we approach the curve where the road widens, I pick up the pace because I want to take my customary picture without dropping the line. I can't be moving too fast, because Mark passes me and says there's a good spot for a photo ahead. (Got it covered, Mark!) It's grey, but it's worth it, and we all stop. Raoul asks Mark how he can take a photo while riding without breaking his neck..

Mark tries to wait for me at the top of the climbs, but I ask him not to. If there's someone waiting I'm unlikely to stop or look around. There's a new 'premium' manure stall to check out, and some serious lichen on a fence that I've been meaning to photograph.



Peter and Ann pass me in their van just before 9am, I give them the thumbs up, and realise they must have been awhile at Checkpoint 1. (I found out later that Simon didn't continue after the bakery.)

Mt Mee is as gorgeous as ever. Capple Grove don't have anything for sale this week, and even the lime seller has slim pickings. The rain has arrived in patches, so I'm soaked through once more, but the road is still good. I usually stop at the Public Hall to refill my bottles, but with the Checkpoint less than 25km behind us, this is completely unnecessary. A paddock of Holsteins stare me down, and the rain eases to a fine drizzle, so I stop for a quick picture. It's cold and windy. I'm wearing long pants, but my legs are cold now, so I'm glad we're descending the familiar route.

I pass bikies at the lookout as they're having hot coffee; they stare at me, and one of them says I'm "bloody crazy", which may well be true.

There's roadwork coming into Woodford, and I'd like to say that drivers were respectful of the narrow and gritty road, but on the whole it was pretty nerve wracking. There's a car show just out of town, which isn't helping with the traffic. We take a new turn out of Woodford, so I catch the full length of the Kilcoy Beerwah Road, and get a better feel for the countryside.

I'm prepared for the pinch before Peachester, and I'm ready for a snack. The fruit shop has a new special; as well as strawberry plants, and what I think are daylilies. One day I'll come through when I'm not on a bike, and when I can stop.

I manage to catch Nick, Ant, Mark, Raoul, and Peter at Checkpoint 2. "There's yummy food here!" seems to be the call of the day. Which means - Ann's baking. Slice. Cake. Biscuits.

Did anyone eat a banana? I think not. Ann has remembered that I don't like a hot drink mid-ride, but there's certainly a hot Stanley flask in the background for tea or coffee.

The boys are packing sandwiches for the road, and Ant asks if I'm coming. I haven't refilled my bottles, so I let them head out. There's a tense moment when I see three pieces of slice in the tub, and I think of the three riders behind me, and discover Simon has gone home. (I owe you one, Simon!) An inappropriately socialised butcherbird begs for my crumbs.

It's a new road descending out of Peachester for me, but it's an old road too with worn shoulders and the occasional remnants of a windmill. I reach a paddock of brown cows with attitude. Regular cows have nothing going for them, but there's something here. One of them cannot get enough of me. He seems furious that none of the other cows are paying attention. He looks about for support, but finds none. I decide it's probably important to ameliorate the situation by moving along. He eyeballs me as I round the corner...

That's when I reach the gravel.

Peter told us at the start: 'Now, there's some gravel. But it's so well packed I don't think they'll ever seal the road.' We looked about at each other, but nobody replied.

The dirt track turned out to be fine, and I think the rain helped organise things. So I'm back on bitumen soon enough. But that's really only an entry to more gravel! This stretch starts with some quail, and a flock of crested pigeons scuttling about.

There are some unexpected soft patches, so it's important to pay attention. But it's difficult to manage when riding through places like this. It's just gorgeous. Brown and red and green. The trees are silver, and some of the sky is almost blue. There are little crops of trees that appear in the paddock to my right, and no photo can do them justice. It's raining again anyway, so I enjoy a moment for what it has. Five tyre tracks lead ahead of me. One of them winding all over the place...

The back of Cove Road is gorgeous, but somewhat forgotten. If you stop to take your breath, you'll see the clouds gently tearing away from distant mountains. A bird calls and when I try to work out what it is, I've attracted the attention of a magpie who's committed to a thorough swooping. He doesn't hear me laugh, but he does a good job opening the velcro on my glove.

It's great riding through the backroads. The surface is clean, and you have a more connected feel to country. Sometimes there is agriculture, sometimes pastoral, sometimes it's just bush. Sometimes you see patience; thousands of bromeliads that will become pineapples in two years' time, then be destroyed and planted again. Sometimes a walking/cycling/horseriding track will appear from practically nowhere. Sometimes it's an abandoned car yard.

I waste five minutes trying to take a photo of something trivial, but since everything is wet and my fingers are wrinkled, my phone cannot register the request.

Then I see this! That's us! The first ever 'Audax' sign at an Audax checkpoint!! Lindsay's heart skips a beat when I say that I saw the sign at the turn and was hoping to take a picture. He ends up taking photos of me and the sign.. (I'm not impressed).

