

**Canola Canter - 14th October 2001 - Ray Stenhouse**

The day dawned clear and sunny with hardly a discernable breeze. A fantastic day for the Canola Canter. The only problem was that it was the day after the Canola Canter, not the day of the Canola Canter. The day of the Canola Canter was not so pleasant. There was scattered showers and a roaring wind.

Despite this 21 riders turned up to start the 100km ride at 7:30am together with the lone 200km entrant. The numbers in the 100 was only down by one on last year whereas the 200km participants had fallen from 10 the previous year. The riders came from Wagga Wagga, Leeton, Junee, Mangoplah, Canberra, Cooma and New Gisborne.

The riders rode out the Old Narrandera Road into the wind. It was a grind up Malabo Hill but from there to the Millwood Control it was downhill generally but still with the cyclists pointed directly into that wind. Just to make life interesting it rained on and off. Due to the conditions the group had splintered reasonably quickly as riders tried to find a pace that they were happy with. The cakes, biscuits and lollies provided at Millwood were a welcome energy source.

After Millwood the route turns right to Coolamon. The road is undulating and overall uphill. The wind was now at the side and quite strong at times with gusts making remaining upright on the bike a test. Again the rain came and went just so you didn't get too comfortable.

From Coolamon the wind was at last behind the riders which pushed them to the next Control at Marrar. There the General Storekeeper verified the brevets as the riders contemplated the final leg back into the wind to Wagga Wagga. The rain had not finished and visited the riders several more times. The wind certainly was challenging as were the hills just out of Marrar in the conditions.

Of the 21 starters in the 100km event 20 finished with times ranging from 4 hours 9 minutes to 5 hours 11 minutes. The lone 200km rider came in in 4 hours 28 minutes. Peter Dixon restocked the energy levels and then remounted his trusty bike for the next 100km. The wind this time was his friend, at least until he got to the control at Wantabadgery. There are some big lumps in the ground between Wagga Wagga and Wantabadgery however with the wind at his back Peter sailed out there. From there Peter had to ride to Junee with the wind at his side before heading back to Wagga Wagga, this time with the wind right in his face again.

Peter endured a secret control at Harefield, approximately 10km out of Junee towards Wagga Wagga, and was feeling pretty good. After a few minute's rest inflicted on him by the organiser Peter continued on his way into Wagga Wagga finishing in a very respectable 9 hours 38 minutes.

The 50km riders fronted up to start at 8:30am. This year saw 10 riders take on the conditions, four down on the previous year. The field consisted mainly of local riders with a few visitors from Leeton. They followed the same route out to Millwood as did the 100km and 200km riders before them. There they had their brevets stamped, grabbed a handful or two of the cakes, biscuits or lollies before returning the same way they had come out. It was a hard slog to Millwood but the wind was at their backs for the return journey. Fastest time was 1 hour 56 minutes and the last rider home registered 3 hours 4 minutes.

All in all, despite the weather's best efforts, the 2001 Canola Canter was a success. Several of the visitors are keen to come back next year which is always pleasing to hear. With PBP preparations beginning the 200km event may get more starters next year but time will tell. Mark October 13 down for next year's Canola Canter. The crew at Bicycle Wagga Wagga would be pleased to see you.