

Canola Canter 12th October 2003 - Ray Stenhouse

The sun was shining, the sky was blue, and a slight breeze was gently moving the leaves in the trees. It was coolish but not cold, fantastic conditions for cycling. But how could this be? It was October 12th, and the Canola Canter was on. It wasn't the day before, it wasn't the day after, it was the day of the ride. With the 100 and 200km riders departing at 7:30am and the 50km people leaving at 8:30am the day had started perfectly.

Five cyclists had entered the 200km event. There were two locals, two riders from Cooma, and one from Umina. All five were using the ride as preparation for the Opperman. Three of these are in one team, while the two others are in separate teams.

There were 17 starters in the 100km event. The majority were locals with a couple making the trip across from Leeton. There was a mixture of Audax veterans and novices amongst the group. After the equipment inspection and the briefing the 22 cyclists departed the Wagga Beach.

This year's 100km route was the reverse of that used in the previous two years. Marrar was the first control, after which the cyclist travelled to Coolamon, then down to Millwood and back to Wagga Wagga. After crossing the Gobbagumbalin Bridge the group splintered into several smaller bunches as the riders settled down to a speed they were happy with. The conditions were ideal and the groups worked well to the start of the Marrar hills where again some fragmentation occurred as people rode the hills at their own pace.

The Marrar control at the 36km mark, as in previous years, was well stocked with cycling fare. Joanne Cheshire had bought out the Coolamon Country Bakehouse or so it seemed. After refuelling the thoughts of a tailwind across to Coolamon had the cyclists mounted and headed west. The wind wasn't huge but the assistance it supplied made this 16km section very enjoyable.

From Coolamon the route turned south to Millwood. There are some ups and downs in this section but it is generally down hill to the Old Narrandera Road. The Millwood control, just after the turn onto the Old Narrandera Road, also served as the 50km turnaround. Here the riders were disappointed to discover that the standard set at Marrar was not repeated. It was a hard ask but at least the 50km riders got some treats.

Into the breeze the riders pedalled past Euberta. There is a slight rise to the top of Malebo Hill with a good descent down for the final run back into Wagga Wagga. The riders crossed the Gobba Bridge once again headed back to the beach to finish the 100. The time limit wasn't a problem with the last of the riders back in 5 hours.

The 200km participants then remounted their trusty cycles and headed east towards Wantabadgery where they had their progress ratified by Jane and Roger Waters. From there they travelled across to meet the Gundagai-Junee Road which was followed into Junee. The Locomotive Hotel served as the control at Junee, which did provide a few temptations of its own, and then the return to Wagga Wagga was made along the Bomen Road beside the Main Southern Railway. All were very happy to finish well within the time limit.

The 50km ride, which is an out and back route to Millwood, was undertaken by 11 riders. This ride saw some experienced Audax riders return after several years off the bike, and at least one person rode their first 50km. Some of the junior racing cyclists coaxed dad and mum to take them on the ride. The slight breeze assisted them to Millwood with the return being a little bit harder due to this. All in all though, the ride was enjoyed by all.

Audax rides, like any organised ride, don't just happen. Many people volunteered their time and efforts to make this year's ride a success. Mal Rogers and Geoff Bray did all the Audax regional stuff. Locally Leila Fell, Carol Raadgever, Geoff Marks, Joanne Cheshire, Steve Brown and his

mate, Jane and Roger Waters, and the people at the Locomotive Hotel all provided assistance in one form or another. Without this assistance the event wouldn't have happened and the riders are all thankful and appreciative of the volunteers' efforts.

Next year the Canola Canter is set for October 10. While we cannot promise a repeat of this year's conditions we can promise you an enjoyable experience on the quiet country roads around the Riverina.

RESULTS

200km

Neyland, Bill - Wagga
Fell, Greg - Wagga
O'Connell, Arthur - Cooma
Pratt, Winston - Umina
Reed, Jennifer Anne - Cooma

100km

Dixon, Peter - Wagga
Turner, Ben - Wagga
Mayger, Garth - Wagga
Els, Anton - Wagga
Burkett, Shane - Wagga
Michalowski, Adam - Wagga
Gibbins, Craig - Mangoplah
Nelson, Graeme - Wagga
Raadgever, Andrew - Leeton
Inch, Denis - Uranquinty
Stoneman, Peter - Leeton
Moore, Gordon - Wagga
Addison, Ron - Wagga
Grant, Brian - San Isidore
Stenhouse, Ray - Wagga

50km

Wood, Lee - Tumut
Robinson, Catherine - Wagga
Bryan, David - Wagga
Bryan, Tara - Wagga
Menz, Noel - Wagga
Carter, Bob - Harefield
Garlan, Matthew - Wagga
Garlan, Sue - Wagga
Marks, Geoff - Wagga
Hackett, Bruce - Junee
Raadgever, Carol - Wagga