

# Bitten by the

# BUG

By Edward Thomlinson

## How Audax came to SA

I suppose for me it really started when I discovered that it was possible to get out of the tenements in Leith, Scotland, and see the wonderful world beyond. A Bitso bicycle and membership of the Scottish Youth Hostel Association were the keys that opened this door, and in truth it has never really closed since! This was around 1946 just after the war when traffic was at its minimum because of the embargo on private motoring and petrol rationing. Grey, post-war days they were, but a heyday for cycling.

Youth hostelling soon gave way to racing and membership of the Musselburgh RRC, with my first race a 10-mile TT, which earned me a second on handicap at age 16. During my 'racing' career I found a preference for the longer distances viz. the 100 miles and 12 hour TTs. In my first 12hrs, post army service, I covered nearly 240 miles, some 380km, which made me one of the top riders in the Musselburgh team, which won the Scottish Best All Rounder team award. Dizzy heights never again to be achieved! More army service followed in Germany, and soon followed marriage and emigration to South Africa, complete with bikes - mine and my wife's. We ended up in Johannesburg. It was quite different here. Cycling was for sport or any wider bike culture. I joined a club and became fully involved in the club scene until a change of job forced me to relinquish even my usual place amongst the also finished!

Later, during a spell as secretary to the Southern Transvaal Amateur Cycling Association, I became friendly with Ron Thompson. It was during this time that we both came to the conclusion that organised cycling was being run by people who substantially didn't like cyclists... A view which to this day has not been much altered! After that, family, job,

mountaineering, golfing, Hobie-cattng etc. gobbled up eighteen years. My work had occasioned a move to Cape Town and then one day, in about 1982, I saw a bike in a shop window. Cycling and Hobie-cattng overlapped for a while, but eventually I got tired of waiting for the wind to get up or die down, and cycling took over completely. The cycling scene in Cape Town was dominated by a 'Fun Ride' culture, which sees a couple of rides every weekend during the season. These rides attract up to four thousand cyclists on average, with the Big One, the Argus Cycle Tour, now in its 28th year attracting as many as 35 000 entries! This event now has an international flavour and Phil Liggett and his wife are regular participants. Other notable participants include Eddie Merckx, Graham Obree and Big Mig. I've completed 24 consecutively!

At some time or other I heard about Audax UK and joined them. One of their write-ups featured Audax Ecosse and mentioned a special jersey, which could be acquired, provided you completed one of their rides.

It so happened that in 1994 I went over to the UK where I entered and duly completed an event, and thus acquired the jersey! The event was the Fife Tayside Traveler and I rode it on my newly acquired All Terrain Bike, with slicks of course. It was really a nostalgic trip around much of the countryside I had enjoyed many years previously. The traffic and road patterns had changed dramatically but the cyclists themselves, not at all. Shortly after the start I found myself in a small group of four riders. During conversation it transpired, amazingly, that one of them, Jimmy Murray, had also been a member of the Musselburgh RRC and in fact we had been quite close friends, a remarkable meeting after more than 40 years! We finished the ride together.



On returning home the feeling was very strong that there could be room for the Audax/Randonneurs Mondiaux concept here. There were a few stuttering attempts in Cape Town but it was only on returning to Johannesburg in 1995 that I was able to strike a real vein of interest, principally because there had been four riders who had completed Edinburgh-London-Edinburgh (ELE) in 1997 who wanted to ride Paris-Brest-Paris (PBP) in 1999 and qualify locally. ELE is the longest of the ultra distance events, some 1 400km, run every four years between the PBP years.


The first South African Audax/Randonneurs Mondiaux 200 was run in 1997 and was vetted by Bob and Suzanne Lepertel who, I think, wanted an excuse for a holiday in South Africa! The Lepertels were, at that time, responsible for all foreign (non-French) organisations affiliated to Audax Club Parisien/Randonneurs Mondiaux. Anyway, they gave the event their blessing and South Africa was admitted as a full member. Bob and Suzanne went on to Cape Town where they observed the Argus Cycle Tour and met up with myself and a group who were interested in promoting the Audax concept and also riding PBP. This had been a large part of my motivation but the dreaded ITB syndrome prevented my qualifying as a participant: so I did PBP on four wheels instead of two! Eventually 16 South Africans started, and 12 finished, including 2 ladies (100% of the ladies who started, finished). Anyway, I qualified for the 2003 PBP and successfully completed the event. At 73 years of age I must have been the 3rd or 4th oldest finisher and with continued good health and fitness stand a chance of being the oldest competitor in 2007. South Africa also has a good chance of fielding the youngest competitor in Nico de Albuquerque who is showing great stamina and promise already at age 17, and will be just 'old' enough to qualify for 2007.

To date we have successfully completed 190 brevets (events) and indications are that the ethos of randonneering now has a strong core element of enthusiasts. By the way, we lay claim to the first Randonneurs

Mondiaux of the so-called new millennium - a 200km event on 9 January 2000! Thanks to the interest taken by Ride magazine there is growing interest and participation. Enquiries have come from the Cape and Namibia, and there is every likelihood that we will have a truly Southern African participation at PBP 2007.

It must be stressed that we are not in competition with any other form of organised cycling and are in fact strong supporters of such.

subscribe, but the unique situation in South Africa has been recognised and accepted so we are able to operate fully under the protocol and allow participants to provide safety of a sort during rides.

Once PBP 2007 is over, there is a distinct possibility that we could host a 1 000+ kilometre Randonnée similar to Edinburgh-London-Edinburgh or Boston-Montreal-Boston, and this would put South Africa firmly on the Long Distance map. Watch this space! 



Denzil Snow (left) Randonneur of the Year 2005 with Eddie Thomlinson

This year for the first time since 2004 we are having the full set of Randonnées which will qualify for 'Super Randonneur' status - that is a full set of 200, 300, 400 and 600km events. This confers not only a special status but also a special award. For PBP 2007 there will also be a full series of 'Super Randonneur' events as qualifiers for PBP, which will be held from November 2006 to May 2007.

One of the difficulties we face in South Africa concerns safety and security on the open road. Audax Club Parisien/Randonneurs Mondiaux have a protocol to which all participating organisations must

Randonneur = the rider  
Randonnée = the ride  
Audax = audacious, bold, daring  
Super Randonneur = a rider who completes a full set of events i.e. 200, 300, 400 and 600 kilometre events in a year. This is necessary in order to qualify for PBP.



## RECOMMENDED RIDES

March is Argus month and while this is an event that has a perennial slot on our recommended rides list, if you don't already have your entry, the best recommendation you can make is that you start preparing yourself for 2012. Entries generally open in about September and frequently close 24 to 36 hours later when they are fully subscribed. So mark it in your diary, store the Cycle Trail web address ([www.cycletrail.co.za](http://www.cycletrail.co.za)) in your favourites and hover your mouse over the 'links' button.

But, what else can you do in the meantime? Well, there's a whole catalogue full of rides listed later in this magazine and you can find one or more on a date and in a venue to suit you. However, there is more to cycling than racing, and there's a whole other world in enjoying your bike on long distance rides.



## Audax Randonneurs

Randonneering is not a competitive sport. It is a form of long distance cycling that is of endurance that requires self-sufficiency and bicycle touring attitude. This style of riding is said to have originated on 12 June 1897 when twelve Italian cyclists attempted the challenge of cycling from Naples to Naples, a distance of 230km, during daylight hours. Nine succeeded. Their attempt was described as "daring", hence the word Audax (from the Italian/Latin word "audace" meaning "audacious"). In 1904, French newspaperman and Tour de France founder, Henri Desgrange, was attracted to this style of cycling and established the French Audax club. On 3 April 1904 the first 200km Audax ride was held. This style of riding led to the creation of the ultimate audax challenge; the Paris-Brest-Paris cycle race, open for professional and non-professional riders. This event is still held every 4 years, and August 2011 sees the 17th edition.

Audax Randonneurs has become an international organisation of long distance cycling that ascribes to the philosophy of randonneering. An event covers anything over 200km; and there are events up to 1400km. The route is pre-planned with designated stopping points. Riders are free to cycle at their own pace and may also stop and sleep or rest, or form groups randomly, provided they finish within the prescribed time limit (generally requiring an average speed of between 15km/hr and 30km/hr). Participants are expected to be self-sufficient - no support is allowed, except at control points; they must carry clothing for inclement weather, spare parts and tools. Rides in excess of 300 kilometres frequently involve night riding and require lights, spare bulbs and reflective gear. When the correct route is followed, the rider must pass through a series of locations known as "controls". The rider carries a brevet card, which is endorsed at each control, and this card is presented to the organisers at the end of the ride as proof that the route was followed. All riders who complete the task (ride) are congratulated and receive a commemorative medal; no prizes are given to those with the fastest times.

**TECHNOLOGY:**  
Randonnée: a randonneuring event (this French word loosely translates "to ramble" or a "long journey")  
Randonneur: a participant in a randonnée  
Brevet Randonneur Mondiaux (BRM): rides of 200km or more completed within specific dates and times.  
Randonnée Populaire (RP): rides under 200km.  
Brevet: a "certification"; it refers to the card carried by a randonneur which gets stamped at controls; it is also used to refer to the event itself, i.e. a certified ride.  
Super Randonneur: a rider who completes a series of 200km, 300km, 400km and 600km brevets within a calendar year.  
Paris-Brest-Paris: a BRM held of once every 4 years, from Paris to the coastal town of Brest and back again (a distance of 1200km) which must be completed within 90 hours.  
Aurasan: Audax Randonneurs South Africa

**TIME LIMITS FOR THE DISTANCES ARE AS FOLLOWS:**  
200km - 13.5 hours  
300km - 20 hours  
400km - 27 hours  
600km - 40 hours  
1000km - 76 hours  
1200km - 90 hours (or 80 or 84 hours by choice)  
1400km - 116.40 hours (optionally 105:16 or 93:20)

**2011 AUDAX SA CALENDAR:**  
Johannesburg  
19 - 20 March: 600 BRM  
10 April: 200 BRM & 100 RP  
1 May: 200 BRM & RP  
5 June: 200 BRM & RP  
3 July: 200 BRM & RP  
7 August: 200 BRM & RP  
25 September: 300 BRM  
23 October: 200 BRM & RP  
20 November: 200 BRM & RP  
Cape Town  
28 - 29 March: 400 BRM  
28 - 29 May: 600 BRM

**ENTRY FEES:**  
• R80 for 100km, 200km and 300km events  
• R120 for 400km and 600km events  
• Under 12yrs free  
• Under 18yrs half price  
• Traildays; individual entry fee plus 50%  
• Entry at the start (discounted) R150.  
• Payment preferably by EFT

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