



PARIS-BREST-PARIS

VIVE LE PARIS – BREST – PARIS 1991.

ALLEZ – ALLEZ – ALLEZ!!!

by Harry – on travelling location.

Bonjour mes amis!! It has been pointed out to me that I am in a privileged position to share with you my observations and experiences of the 1991 Paris - Brest -Paris cycling race of 1218km. Whilst I have done extensive journalistic work within my small community, I have never been approached to write for a reading audience like that of the Audax Club of Australia. Oops! I have omitted to introduce myself. I'm Harry the Koala, who was mascot and navigator for the little known riding team of Peter (Pierre) Donnan et Andrew (Andre) Bray - now living "legends" along with their fellow Aussie P-B-P riders. Onya guys and gals (there were 3), it was a really fantastic effort, with the pain fast fading into oblivion - I tink em ya's great!!



There is no doubt that every rider prepared differently and had different experiences of the ride, but I had such a wonderful armchair ride between Pierre's handlebars, I believe it worthwhile for posterity, to record what these two guys got up to and how they went about it. Interestingly enough, neither of them decided too early that they would ride the P-B-P. It was the end of April when Pierre decided to go to France and mid-June for, Andre. However, once having decided to go, it was all stops out to set in place an adequate training program and complete all the necessary preparations and arrangements to fulfil "their French dream".

I think of my holiday as having four parts - namely: "Training", "On Tour", "P-B-P ride", and "Paris".

Holidays commenced for Pierre on 15th July and for Andre one week later, with a concentrated Training program starting. I've never seen them so dedicated, having never undertaken any structured training program before. Both being bankers, they adopted a "miles in the bank" approach to training. I prefer a "gum leaves in the stomach" approach myself. They rode together through Victoria and covered some 1,750km., (with touring load), in the fortnight ended 3rd August and of course caught up with a couple of my rellies. Then they had six days off their bikes to recuperate and pack, ready to leave for France on the 9th August. I like to give credit where credit is due. Let me say that these guys put in some real "quality training" - it rained every day of their training with the majority of days blowing unfavourable winds. Of course their training included that memorable Audax 200km, on 27th July that had near freezing temperatures and horrendous winds and rain that many of you will readily recall. I was glad that I wasn't in my tree that day. I can tell you I was thankful for my quality fur coat fortunately Andre found some quality gum leaves and dipped them in honey for me - thank goodness - my sugar level had dropped somewhat by the time I got to Healesville - I hate the bonk!!

The day of departure for France arrived and I was so excited I fell out of my tree twice. Otherwise, everything went according to plan. Pierre and Andre arrived with plenty of time for their British Airways flight and left on the same flight with Phil Rowley and Mark Sorrell. It was a great flight in every respect except the coffee



PARIS-BREST-PARIS

cups were too small. Pierre and Andre settled into Paris life quickly and was joined by Phil Rowley with the three of them commencing the "On Tour" of the P-B-P route on the 12th August. They left with touring loads and stopped at both camping grounds and hotels depending on the demands of the days ride. I had a helluva good time, especially when I threw in an occasional 180° navigational error. The guys got real mad with me but I wasn't going to have them take me for granted. However this "Tour" proved to be important for their later success in the P-B-P ride, for a number of reasons. It gave them time to adjust to the cultural differences in the very best possible environment - ie cycling the French countryside, they had the benefit of feeling the terrain, experiencing the route, reading road signs, riding on the "wrong" side of the road and using the French language. It enabled them to map out in their minds where they could find suitable shops for snacks if they were needed on the P-B-P ride. They never gave a thought to my gum leaves!! I was desperate in the first week for a gum leaf but must admit I quickly came to enjoy my croissant "avec frais confiture" (with strawberry jam). I am convinced this first fortnight "On Tour", allowed the guys to settle into their new environment and feel completely at ease and with exciting anticipation for the P-B-P ride itself. They completed the "Tour" on the 22nd August, feeling a great sense of achievement at having completed what they set out to do that is ride the whole route of 1218kms. They settled into the Adagio Hotel for a brief recovery program and thoroughly enjoyed this brief respite. They embarked on a quiet lazy time of wandering around the Saint Quentin shopping centre, carbohydrate loading and plenty of sleep. These guys are pretty good on the tooth and are convinced carbohydrate loading works. Sunday evening 25th August arrived and found 30 Aussies sharing the "Last Supper" at the Adagio Hotel. It was a great time of real fellowship with the air charged with nervous expectation knowing they would soon demand of themselves something "untried" and "unknown".

Monday morning 26th August dawned after some restless sleep and after the last minute preparations left for the Sports Stadium at 9pm, where the P-B-P ride was to leave. We left the Sports Stadium in a group of about 700 riders at 10.15pm, midst a large crowd of French folk lining the road. It was unbelievably exhilarating. Because it was their summer holiday time, there were probably more people than there might usually be. In fact there continued to be little groups of people waving us on in the little villages until 3.00am, in the morning. The long snake shape of red tail lights for as far as you could see was a memorable sight, for the villagers this sight lasted a long time because there were approximately 3,200 riders in total. The people along the route were marvellous and very enthusiastic for us - calling out - Allez! Allez! Allez! - Bonsoir! - Bon nuit! - Bon voyage! etc. You felt you were a cycling "sportif" celebrity. Monday night was still and cold, with Tuesday hot and a tailwind. The guys were joined by Peter Moore and Phil Van Alstyne a Canadian, making an awesome foursome. They rode steady and consistently talking and sharing which proved to be so important to maintain a strong mental approach with confidence. They made good time and continued to Carhaix Plouguer 522km out, arriving there 3.15am Wednesday with the guys having 2 hours sleep. I was in the happy position of having a little snooze when it suited me and I did. I didn't find the ride a strain at all. We continued to Brest and did the Brest turnaround loop in day light thankfully, riding to Tinteniac (858km), arriving 3am, Thursday and having 3 hours sleep at that time. Thursday proved demanding with headwinds and hills. We pressed on reaching Nogent Le Roi; the last Control Point before the finish, late Thursday night and decided not to sleep. At Nogent Le Roi the guys ate a delicious hot omelette and 3 strong eye-boggling coffees whilst I had my milk and honey and then set off for the last onslaught. It was a good night but freezing cold. We had



PARIS-BREST-PARIS

adequate clothing and with the good food felt comfortable. There was a mixture of tiredness, subdued expectation and a quiet longing to get to the end without drama since we were now so close. The gradual dawning of a new day at 6.30am, was exhilarating and we arrived at the finish line 7.15am, Friday. The "awesome foursome" were thrilled beyond belief that they had completed the P-B-P of 1218km in 81, hours so well and felt so good - with little pain. A wonderful experience and achievement. I can tell you though, I've seen enough of the inside of a handlebar bag for some time - I've got a few bald patches now.

After the P-B-P the riders went their separate ways. Both Pierre and Andre spent a few leisurely days in Paris doing some low-key sight-seeing whilst going through a recovery process. They thoroughly enjoyed themselves but I found this part of the trip lousy. The handlebar bag didn't see the light of day so neither did I.

Vive le Paris - Brest - Paris.

Limericks written by 'Harry'

There was a young man called Pierre,
Who came a long way from despair,
He got on his bike,
Rode strongly alright,
Paris-Brest-Paris with time spare.

Bonjour mes amis, 'I love France',
The boys and the girls dropped their pants,
It was time for a leak,
The French had a peek,
There's herbage destruction in France!

Cycling hero honored in Paris

28-8-91

By ROSIE HOBAN



ONE of Australia's most beloved sporting heroes, cycling champion Sir Hubert Opperman, this week became the toast of France for the second time in 60 years.

Sir Hubert, or Oppie, as he is known, was invited to Paris by cycling authorities to celebrate the centenary of the gruelling Paris-Brest-Paris cycling race.

In 1931 Sir Hubert, now 87, became the first Australian to win the race, and his efforts captured the hearts of the French.

This week he was awarded the Medal of Paris by the Mayor, Mr Jacques Chirac, for outstanding contributions to sport in France.

The medal was presented in a city square in Paris before thousands of spectators at the launch of the centenary celebrations. It was also the beginning of this year's Paris-Brest-Paris 1200km event, contested by hundreds of riders from

around the world, including ANDRE PETE

Sir Hubert's racing career will be featured in a film produced by Melbourne company Lyons-Sinclair.

Mr Clayton Sinclair travelled to Paris with Oppie and his wife, Lady Mavys, to gather information for the film, likely to be screened in 1993.

Mr Sinclair said Oppie was better known in France than he was in Australia.

Sir Hubert received the 'Prix D'or' in France, 1928.

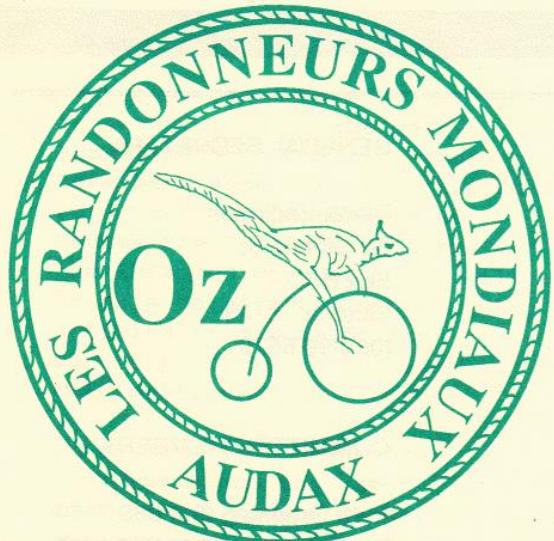
REBE
ANDRE
PETE

PETER

CLAYTON

SINCLAIR

CLAYTON

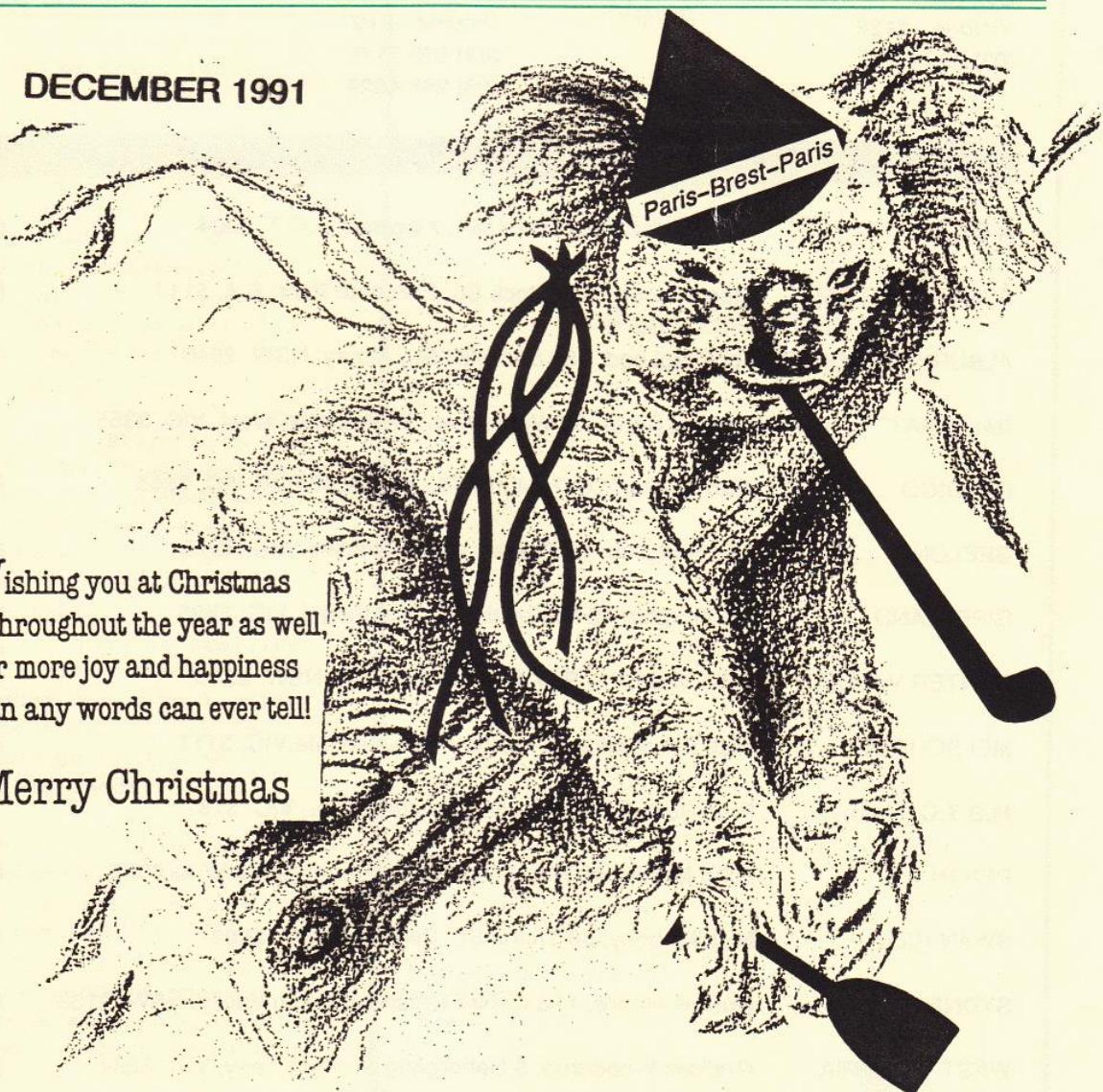


THE
AUDAX
CLUB OF AUSTRALIA
Affiliated with AUDAX CLUB PARISIEN

DECEMBER 1991

Wishing you at Christmas
and throughout the year as well
Far more joy and happiness
Than any words can ever tell!

Merry Christmas



Journal of Audax Club of Australia

Editor: Ruth Greening