

As you formulate your 2021 calendars, please remember that September 11 will be a special day. Yes, a sad day for the anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the US twenty years ago, but next year will also be the 100th anniversary of the first Audax Club Parisien "allure libre" 200k in 1921. A year from now the ACP will be celebrating the centenary of what we call "randonneuring." Happily, 9/11/21 falls on a Saturday so please think about scheduling a BRM 200 km brevet next year and join in the big celebration. There will likely be a special award for all those who finish the ride from the ACP and/or RUSA.

A little background-- The Audax Club Parisien was founded in November of 1904 to participate in the new "audax" 200k endurance rides that were starting to take place. "Audax" signified always riding in a group at about 16-18 kph with a road captain who kept the group together the entire time, and from going too fast. The rides often lasted from dawn to dusk and were fairly popular around the Paris region. Upon a successful completion of the ride, participants were awarded a certificate or diploma (brevet in French) for their athletic feat-- no small thing in a time of dirt roads and cobblestones and fairly primitive bicycles and cycling clothes and equipment

Over time some of the riders began to itch to go faster than the steady audax pace, others wanted to also include audax hiking activities with the group cycling, while others wanted the club to remain true to its audax group cycling format. Club meetings became pretty heated affairs and in the summer of 1921 it all exploded. A majority of the ACP members voted to start doing "allure libre" or free-pace brevets that allowed riders to choose their own pace so long as they stayed inside the minimum and maximum speeds, and they could ride alone or in a group-- the same as we do today. The audax cyclists angrily decamped and formed their own organization, as did the hiking contingent.

So, there was no more "audax" in the Audax Club Parisien. On Sunday, September 11, 1921 the ACP held its first free-pace brevet of 200 km. The route was a big loop that went west and south of Paris to Dreux, Chartres, and then back to Paris. Twenty-six randonneurs and randonneuses completed the ride, arriving at intervals back in Paris. Brevet #1 was issued that day, starting a continuous string of numbered brevets that we still earn today. The free-pace randonneuring begun that day eventually spread through France in the 1920s and -30s, around the globe starting in the 1970s, and here we are in the 21st century, still out earning our diplomas while choosing to ride our own pace and how many people we want to ride with. This is the formula of the Brevets de Randonneurs Mondiaux, or BRM that you see on the front of brevet cards sanctioned by the ACP.

In 1921 the world was just coming off an awful pandemic that killed millions of people, while we are still in one ourselves. Hopefully things will be better next year, but for now it will be best to remember our safe social distancing methods to use on brevets next year, including during the big birthday bash. Also, a note about scheduling-- the ACP has told RUSA HQ that they will allow some flexibility in scheduling these BRM anniversary rides. Yes, they should take place on 9/11, but they can be added to the calendar later if you are not sure about putting one on now

as you submit your 2021 calendar. Also, look for some articles next year in American Randonneur that will build RUSA member interest in participating in these rides.