

## VVCMCC END OF SUMMER TOUR 21st TO 27th FEBRUARY 2015 TOUR REPORT

### The Riders:

1. Lorraine Litster: (Leader) K75 BMW 1986
2. Len Skipper Triumph Tiger 2012
3. Ron Jacobs R100GSPD 1992
4. Peter Van Der Kley Triumph America 2007
5. Ian Duvall KTM 995 2011: (Left us at Naracoorte)
7. Lou Baljak BMW K1100 2002 (one night only)
  
8. Bob Astley-Boden Van (Left at Queenscliff)

I usually run these tours in the Spring, but due to a busy Spring I ran the tour as an 'End of Summer' event. The dates being chosen to avoid Autumn gales on the Great Ocean Road, as it transpired I was not entirely successful.

A bit about the riders & their bikes before I begin the tale:

Lorraine: I had chosen my previously maligned K75 as it was registered & I have full luggage for it. It proved itself to be a faultless & enjoyable mount for the trip & redeemed itself completely.

Len Skipper is an experienced rider who runs the VVC Wednesday rides: his mount was his favourite Triumph Tiger. It too performed faultlessly. Indeed all the machines behaved perfectly.

Ron Jacobs is probably not known to many of you as he is not a member of VVC, although we see him on rides sometimes. He is very experienced & has ridden on an earlier tour on his R100GS. He travelled very light with just a back pack.

Peter Van der Kley admitted to inexperience & was delighted by every new experience as he is not well travelled in country Australia. His Triumph America had an impressive paint scheme done recently by 'Redback'.

Ian Duvall rode his big KTM which he later admitted needed a new chain after he left us in Naracoorte. Ian was the best rider in the group, indeed I know of no rider in VVC to surpass him.

Lou Baljak has ridden on previous tours & rode his K1100. He left us at Bruthen on Day 2 to ride home.

Bob Astley (Bob the Van) was on the way to Coolac to look at a veteran bike (an Astley). He left us at Queenscliff.

**Day 1:** The tour started at the Hume Caltex with Peter's Brother in Law Dave riding with us to Cooma. The morning was sunny & cool & along the Monaro we ran into patches of fog, which was unexpected. Cooma arrived & a stop for coffee. Ian had ridden the Boboyan road to Cooma & joined us there. He hates the 'borified' Monaro, as we all do, but the only alternative is the mostly dirt Boboyan, unsuitable for most bikes & riders.

The ride to Jindabyne was via Dalgety, a far more interesting ride than the main road via Berridale. There we had a light lunch before crossing the mountains & descending to the Scammell Lookout which has good views of Mt Townsend. Len & Bob had missed the instruction & we didn't see them again until we refuelled in Corryong. It was a very hot day well into the 30s. The rest of the day took us towards Tallangatta then up the Omeo Highway to our destination Mitta-Mitta. I was not able to accommodate everybody in the modern pub so four fellows were relegated to the caravan park which was barely satisfactory. That evening the pub was heaving with people, I surmise from the Dartmouth Dam Recreation area a few miles away. Our meals were good but the service chaotic. Outside such a busy time this would be a very good overnight stop. We had ridden 465 Km on day 1.

**Day 2** started with a very challenging ride over the Omeo Highway. This is a highway in name only: in reality it is 100km of tortuous narrow & hilly riding: with barely a few hundred yards straight.. I had crossed this mountain 18 months ago when it was still being tarred. I feared that once tar it would become a haven for sports bikes & grey nomads. Evidently both of these groups find this too difficult & it seems to appeal to mostly 4WDs & serious touring riders. By the time we arrived at Omeo we needed the break before descending to the coast. The heat hit us just south of Omeo & it was again well over 30C when we rode into Bruthen our lunch stop. Here Lou said his goodbyes & rode off in the direction of Lakes Entrance.

We rode to Bairnsdale then detoured from the main road to Sale where we refuelled in searing heat. There were many bikes on the road all returning from the 'Super Bike' races at Philip Island: few police in evidence though.. From Sale we rode to Yarram, a dull section especially in the heat. Thunderstorms were around but we managed to avoid them. Toora our destination for the night is a forgotten little town. The Royal Standard Hotel was our accommodation. This was cheap with rooms with TV & A/C costing \$40. The meals were good value & enormous. I can recommend Toora as an overnight stop. We had ridden 406 Km on Day 2.

**Day 3** started well, sunny & mild but as we passed Wonthaggi the ominous thunderclouds were brewing again to the west, we would not be so lucky today. The road around Western Port is variously called the A420 or the M420. It has nothing to recommend it to riders. We left this road at Tooradin to ride down the Eastern coast of the Mornington Peninsula. We stopped for fuel & a coffee in Pearcedale & here Bob left his debit card on the counter of the petrol station, which he only discovered on the ferry. It was a little later that a vicious storm cell hit us & we scrambled to get our waterproofs on. It teamed with rain all the way to Sorrento where we were to take the ferry across the mouth of Port Philip Bay. Bike & rider cost \$35, well worth it I thought. The ferry crossing was stormy & we were told to stand by our bikes as the ferry rolled, water sloshing the deck, an interesting crossing indeed.

When we arrived in Queenscliff the storm had passed giving way to grey cool but dry weather. Bob left us here to find a bank to rectify his mislaid card. We had some late lunch then headed for Torquay & the Great Ocean Road. This was slow urban riding

which took ages. The 'Road' itself begins at Anglesea & we were in good spirits despite the rain & the ferry having consumed a lot of time: but the afternoon was advancing. The GOR was as spectacular & lovely as I remember it, but on a dull cool & windy afternoon it did not look its best. Worse still were the hoards of foreign tourists driving hire cars which they insisted on driving erratically at 40Km/hr, never giving way. In our cold wet & tired state this soon became irritating.

Near Lorne we rode around a corner & I thought there had been an accident: at least a dozen hire cars were pulled over haphazardly & their occupants were running down the road. The reason for this chaos? : they had spied a poor koala in a tree! I needed fuel by the time we reached Apollo Bay & we still had over 100 Km to ride. I was cold the others too I suspect. We were cured of the GOR by now & wanted to get to our destination Port Campbell. Most of this section is inland & mostly free of the dreaded tourists. It was well after 6pm when we rode into our destination, the 'Top O Town' Motel. Ron had ridden ahead & taken the room keys. The accommodation here was very good, two double storey units. This is a serious tourist town lying in the centre of the famous coastal features. We tried the bistro in the pub for dinner but saw at least two dozen ravenous teenagers waiting for their meals so we left & ended up at a dreadfully crowded Pizza place. Not the best evening of the trip: Day 3 was 460 Km, too long really with the ferry taking almost two hours from the day.

**Day 4:** The day began dull & overcast, but after a pleasant breakfast we were ready to ride. We stopped at both the 'London Bridge' feature (which collapsed in 1990) & the 'Martyrs' before leaving the coast & riding to Warrnambool for fuel, where the sun came out. This is a large busy city so we did not stop, instead riding on to pretty Port Fairy for our tea stop. We had no alternative but to take the Princes Hwy to Portland where we took the C192 along the coast to Mt Gambier. We had lunch at the tiny town of Nelson, in the pub, before riding on to the spectacular volcanic Blue Lake in Mt. Gambier. The country had by this time taken on the typical SA look, dry & parched. From Millicent we took the B101 to Robe. This road passes several salt lakes which smelled a bit of H<sub>2</sub>S. Robe is a pretty seaside town today, but was once a major port for this area of SA. The bay is littered with wrecks so I was told. Robe looked as if its tourist season had finished & the town seemed mostly deserted but for locals. A cold wind blew off the bay despite a sunny afternoon. Our accommodation was in the Guichen Bay Motel, in the main street. Not a bad place to stay, but no breakfast.. We ate in the Robe Hotel, a very nice meal. We had ridden 400Km on day 4.

**Day 5:** We had breakfast in a nearby bakery & were on the road by 0800. It was a chilly start for the first 100 Km to Naracoorte where we toured the famous fossil cave at 1015. We were in good time due to our early departure. The tour was marred somewhat by our guide, a Korean woman who giggled a lot & spoke to us as if we were 8 years old. It was lunchtime when we returned to Naracoorte so we had some lunch & refuelled for our long trek of 350Km to Bendigo. Ian left us after lunch to explore this area, where he was born. After our return Ian told me of his adventures in SA.

Our route east was the Wimmera Highway or the C240, which goes all the way to Bendigo. The dry parched SA countryside gradually gave way to Victorian wheat country. The crop had been harvested & the massive fields looked baked & dry as we rode east to Horsham. We only stopped in this pleasant city briefly; Ron was not impressed with the parking meters! We decided to ride on to St Arnaud for our afternoon break. We passed several little villages: Murtoa, Rupanyup & Marnoo along the way, all pleasant enough but with little to offer a traveller. I had never visited St. Arnaud but found it to be a pleasant tidy town, again worthy of an overnight stop.. Few tourists visit this corner of Victoria I would think however. We had refreshments at a rather scruffy café before riding on the last 100km leg to Bendigo. now only four of us. I was feeling refreshed & this last 100 Km seemed a breeze. It was also prettier country with low hills & bendy roads.

After such open & empty roads for many miles arriving in the traffic of Bendigo was a surprise. Len found the motel the 'Budget Oval' using the GPS and we were soon ensconced. This motel, opposite the cricket oval, was old style but modernised, & very acceptable. We were told of a lovely pub to eat within walking distance, the 'Boundary Hotel'. I found that I had eaten here once before on a recce trip. It was a great place to eat & highly recommended. We had ridden 496 Km on day 5, a very good effort.

**Day 6:** The day dawned with cloudy skies & the threat of rain & we were on the road by a little after 8am; which had become our habit during the week. On the outskirts of the city it seemed that rain was setting in so we stopped to don waterproofs. However it did not eventuate & we later took them off again, still dry. We were on a main road to Heathcote, a pleasant Victorian town, then on to Seymour via the Puckapunyal army camp on a 'cut through' road I have used several times. I have to admit that I do not like Seymour & the throng of people milling around outside the Court House rather amplified my dislike of the place. We did not stop: instead we rode on to the pretty town of Yea where we did stop for fuel & refreshments. We shared the café with half a dozen Victorian police riders (who were on rider training & not revenue raising duties.)

The road then took us to Mansfield where Ron took us to the cemetery to see the graves of three police troopers who had been killed by the Kelly gang. The Victorian Government had erected splendid memorials to the three men. We decided to ride over the mountain to Whitfield for lunch at a little café I knew there. On the way we detoured to Power's Lookout, a worthy spot indeed & named after Kelly's mentor, a seemingly unsuccessful bush ranger. Our lunch in Whitfield was very good: there is also a pub there on the corner if you prefer that. It was hot in the valley. Unfortunately the more direct route to Beechworth, our destination for the night, namely the road to Myrtleford is poor dirt for over 20 Km so we avoided that road. Instead the signage takes you via Wangaratta, which is a nice city but I really did not need to ride down its main street!

We got to Beechworth in good time, well before 5pm to find that our accommodation in the Hibernian Hotel was the best of the whole trip, real luxury. They even gave us a voucher each for a free drink! I am very fond of Beechworth & have stayed there several times before. Several of us took a look around town before the pub's 'Parmi Night' started. They had at least ten different 'parmis' available. I chose the Greek one, yes a Greek Parmi & at \$14.50: a bargain! We had ridden 367Km today, so a relatively short ride.

**Day 7:** Our last day on the road & a long ride home of over 500 Km. I think most were a little weary after six days in the saddle but strangely I felt fine, especially as I had only been released from hospital a little over a week before. Our route took us south almost to Dederang then north again on the parallel road to the C531 to the Murray Valley Hwy. My maps were not up to the task so I led this section from memory. We stopped for the Tallangatta lookout which was well worth a look, before retracing our steps of last Saturday for a couple of miles. We then crossed the Granya Gap to the Walwa road following the Murray river, here part of the Hume Weir.

Before we reached Walwa we crossed the Murray back into NSW & the little village of Jingellic, which has a nice little pub & a shop. We stopped here for a short break before riding on to Tumbarumba for fuel & lunch. Some maps show this section of road as dirt but in reality it is a first class tarmac road. After lunch we took the Elliott Way to Cabramurra. This is a delightful road to cross the Snowys & you often see herds of Brumbies crossing the road. I saw just one, a black stallion. Cabramurra is the highest town in Australia & we had to take Peter there to show him. There is fuel & a café here & I think accommodation too in this Snowy Mountain Hydro town.

Our descent to Kiandra is gradual before another climb over a range on the Snowy Mountain Hwy. We descended again, this for the last time to Adaminaby. Ron was to leave us here for the return via the Boboyan Road. We said our goodbyes then the remaining three of us rode on to Cooma for afternoon tea & the last 100 Km to home via the despised Monaro Hwy. I had clocked 502 Km on this last day resulting in a total of 3097 Km for the whole tour. All the bikes ran faultlessly & all the riders stood the test admirably. I must say it was a pleasure to ride with such a competent & friendly group of riders. I am already asking myself where we might ride on the next tour? We later tallied up the costs & concluded that we had each spent about \$110 per day, which covered accommodation, meals & fuel.

**Lorraine Litster**  
**5 March 2015**