

## Townsville Restored Motorcycle Club Members Ride to Bethanga.

The idea of riding our SRs all the way from Townsville to Bethanga on the Hume Weir was first floated by Rick after riding to the annual SR500 Club Rally from Warwick in 2022. "Why don't we ride all the way next year?" asked Rick. My silence should have been sufficient response. Then Andy who had an SR with a very worn engine said he'd like to do it if he didn't have to camp. The stories we told about getting soaked in 2022 and then riding home via Tumberumba and Batlow in the cold discouraged the camping option. I had intended to do my usual thing and carry the SR to Warwick and ride from there.

Andy is the youngster of the group at sixty-four years of age. The combined age of rider and bike being 107 years. The others on the ride having earlier models each had a combined age of bike and rider of 113 years, what could possibly go wrong??

Bike preparations were still under way at Andy's place two days before departure. My Yamaha received a new set of sprockets and a chain, tyres, valve check and oil and filter change. I added Slime to my tyres to prevent sudden deflation and to seal any small punctures. I added some zip ties, chain lube, a litre of 20W50 and a roll of Gorilla tape. The others packed enough tools to do an engine rebuild on the side of the road. Andy is a very good mechanic, a valuable asset on a group ride like this. Rick is also handy with the tools, so he likes to bring all of them on a ride.

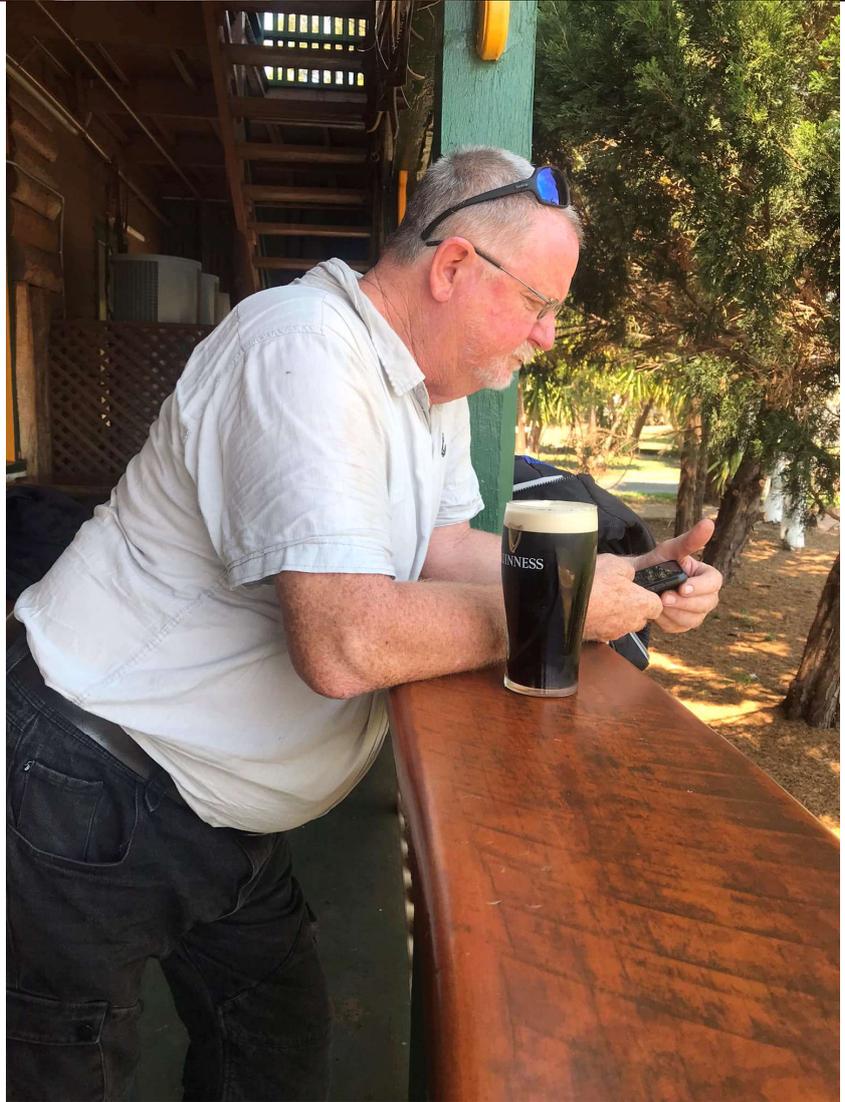
We departed early Sunday morning from the BP service station at Cluden after a coffee. Our first stop for fuel was in Charters Towers. My bike had used 6.6L to cover 140kms, the others had used a whisker more. The next fuel available was at Belyando Crossing, the only fuel available between Charters Towers and Clermont a distance of about 370kms. When we turned south we ran into a strong headwind and my bike's fuel economy suffered. I went onto reserve about thirty kilometres before Belyando Crossing, I know I have two litres in reserve but I slowed down anyway. The fuel here is expensive. My twelve litre tank took eleven litres. Clermont was next where we refuelled and had lunch at the Commercial Hotel. Rick's SR refused to start after lunch and needed a new sparkplug to get it going. Our destination for the day was Emerald and the trip meter ticked over 639kms, 10% of the journey done.

Day two we were headed for Eidsvold. We stopped for breakfast after an early start at Duaringa, another place with expensive fuel. Rick need some Loctite to secure his throttle lock. After arriving in Eidsvold we had a go at fixing my indicators. There was a blown fuse and they worked with the engine off. Later we actually fixed them by wiring in a new indicator can. We took a backroad called Abercorn Road from Monto to Eidsvold a good road with little traffic and good corners. There is a scenic waterhole along the way called "The Bunyip Hole" we stopped here to stretch our legs. We stayed at the Star Hotel in Eidsvold a comfortable bike friendly spot.



The Bunyip Hole

Day three we headed towards Durong, Dalby and our goal for the day Warwick. We had a good breakfast in Mundubbera at the bakery. The roads in the Burnett are varied with some narrow bitumen and some that could throw you out of your seat. The roadhouse at Darr's Creek has good food and coffee, their bacon and egg burgers are among the best I've had. We stopped at a friend's place to admire his collection of classic cars and bikes. Bultaco Metrallas, Ducati SSs and other assorted classic bikes and cars. We were running ahead of time, so I took the scenic route through Toowoomba called the bypass, it was then on to Nobby, Steele Rudd country and the home of Sister Kenny who revolutionised the treatment of polio victims. From here we went to the Irish Pub in Clifton for a Guinness before I took the backroads to Allora and Warwick. We stayed with my sister in Warwick who has been very generous in hosting small groups of my riding friends over the years. We did a few running repairs to the bikes after visiting the local Repco store. My indicators were fixed, thanks Andy and the oil leaking from Andy's taco drive was sort of sorted. My bike needed some oil about 150ml. Total distance so far 1639kms.





Steel Rudd's Pub Nobby and The Irish Pub in Clifton.



Andy fixing my indicators.

The next morning, we were off to Gloucester and the very good Roundabout Hotel. They provide a lock up garage for the bikes and rooms at reasonable rates. We headed down the New England and had breakfast in Stanthorpe before tackling Bolivia Hill before heading to Glen Innes. Here we had a disaster of Biblical proportions, Rick dropped a full bottle of Chivas Regal on the driveway of the

servo, it smelt great, intoxicating even but undrinkable. From this point on I was given the task of transporting the vital supplies as I had plenty of space in my panniers as they weren't bulging with tools and spares. The ride from Uralla to Walcha is fine but the ride from Walcha to Gloucester is finer. The long hills required a run up and a downshift on my bike as I had raised the gearing to 17/42. There were lots of big adventure bikes headed for Walcha as there was a big rally on there on the weekend. Lots of KTMs and GS BMWs were heading towards Walcha. The last few kilometres into Gloucester were good fun. We had now completed 2120kms so one third of the ride completed, and the bikes were still doing well.



Scenic Lookout on the Thunderbolt's Way,

The ride from Gloucester the next morning to Singleton was over a road that was just a series of patched patches, but the corners were fun. We got separated in Singleton by the heavy traffic before being reunited at the Ampol on top of the hill. We headed to Denman where we had some more coffee. We took the shortcut out to the Bylong Vally Way, this is a great road with a couple of good twisty sections to enjoy. Our lunch stop was at the Rylstone Hotel, a place with good rooms and

lockup accommodation for bikes. But we were off to Bathurst where Andy insisted on doing a lap of The Mountain.



We indulged him by doing two. It was then to our Motel for the night and the Irish Pub for dinner and another Guinness. Luckily there was a Dan Murphy's opposite the motel and a replacement bottle of Chivas was liberated from the shelves. It rained that night and the forecast for the next day was bleak.

An early start had us on the road through Perthville to Trunkey Creek, it was cold so we donned our wet weather gear to keep out the chill. The road from Trunkey Creek to Crookwell is another good ride on a bike, not a lot of traffic and plenty of corners. We have an encounter with wildlife when a kangaroo decided to hop down the road directly in front of us, it stayed on the centre line for some time. Doing a steady 40kph this roo was not giving up his spot on the highway. From Crookwell we went to Gunning before joining the Hume Highway to Gundagai. We sat behind a B Double that was doing a great job of punching a hole in the air which allowed the bikes to cruise along easily. We left the highway at Gundagai and refuelled before looking for lunch. Andy and Rick joined a long line of coffee drinkers at the café. I decided to head off to Granya and Bethanga via Tumut, Batlow and Jingellic. The ride along the Murray Valley highway is always enjoyable with the Murray River on the right and good farmland surrounding it. I ran onto reserve just out of Bethanga. Andy and Rick took the Hume to Wodonga before turning up at the rally site. My odometer showed 3169kms.

We eventually went to our accommodation at the Hume Resort to freshen up before riding back for dinner. The food at the rally was very good as usual, the desserts were brilliant. It was good to catch up with so many of the regulars. The ride back to the resort was pretty slow, we were warned about the large number of kangaroos in the area..

We woke early the next morning and arrived well before breakfast. We had a coffee and chatted with other early risers. Breakfast was excellent and we waited for the group to assemble for the ride to Tallangatta. This year there seemed to be a larger number of SR500s on the ride. After a coffee and curry pie we headed back to the rally for the Show and Shine and the cricket. We arranged a taxi to get us to and from the Saturday night dinner, again excellent catering was on offer.

Andy was awarded the long distance award this year. We were only half way through the ride at just over 3000kms. The taxi picked us up early so we didn't get a chance to kill more redundant brain cells.



The return journey was via a different route. Our first stop was at Temora to look at the Aviation Museum, we used our senior's cards to get a discount on admission. Unfortunately, a large part of the collection was in Newcastle doing a flying display. We headed for Dubbo, Parkes and

Coonabaraban. We made good progress until the rain caught up with us just on dusk. We found a motel with a room for three and parked our bikes undercover. There was a Chinese restaurant across the road so that's where we went. A good bottle of red and a banquet went down very well. The best Chinese food I've had in years.



The Dish

Our goal the next day was Warwick, the rain was all around us. We dodged the rain to Gilgandra and only got light rain as we went through Manilla, Bingara and Warialda. I told the others that the pub at Yetman was a good place for lunch, wrong, it was closed. So we headed for Texas on the border. Texas used to have the cheapest fuel in Queensland it wasn't, but it was a lot cheaper than in NSW. We had lunch after refilling the bikes at a take-away place in the main street. The food and coffee were excellent and the prices very reasonable. Rick went to the Op shop to see if he could get a set of rain pants. The lady who ran the shop told him that her husband had a rain suit that he wanted to get rid of. So we waited for it to arrive. Free! It was a good fit. Friendly people those Texans. We took the road through Green Up. Emus and kangaroos added to the flowing floodways, the Sena came in handy to warn the others of hazards ahead. I used this road many times when I taught in the area. Then the heavens opened and visibility was terrible, Rick's SR started to backfire and eventually stopped. WD40 got it running again. We pulled into the Karara Hotel and applied more WD40. We arrived in Warwick, tired and wet. We spread out our gear to dry. We had a great meal and hit the sack early.

We were within striking distance of home now and we just wanted to get there as quickly as possible. Our goal was Rockhampton a distance of 723kms about half way. We went to Dalby, back through Darr Creek for breakfast and then to Munduberra. Here we refuelled before heading to Eidsvold. From Eidsvold we took the Abercorn Road past the Bunyip Hole.

This is where Rick went off the road and ended up in Rockhampton by helicopter and his bike back in Eidsvold on the back of a tow truck. His new rain suit was cut off in the hospital as was his new SR Club T-shirt and his TRMCC jumper. He has 6 cracked vertebrae in his upper back and will require weeks of rest. When I reached him he was pinned under his bike and there was a lot of damage to his panniers. His helmet had taken a good hit and he was pretty knocked around. The locals who pulled up to help were fantastic. The emergency workers were very professional and did a great job. We went to the hospital in Monto to see Rick before the helicopter took him to Rockhampton.

Meanwhile Andy and I stayed in Monto for the night, if you're going to fall off your bike then Monto is the place to do it. The locals who came to our assistance were fantastic.



After all the drama we still had to go to Rocky and we dropped into the Emergency Department to see Rick in his birthday suit, all his clothes were in Eidsvold, luckily his wife had flown up from Brisbane and she'd been shopping for the essentials. After telling Rick that his bike was in good hands it was time to push on.

Andy's bike was starting to go downhill. The engine was struggling, it was amazing that it had made it this far, it had been an engine in a box that was very worn and it had been put together quickly, it needed a rebuild before this ride began. We headed north to Mackay. I have family in Mackay, so I spent the night with my grandkids and Andy pushed on to Townsville, he made it home at about 8:30 his bike smoking and leaking oil from many places. I took my time and arrived home in Townsville just after mid-day. Total distance 6272kms.

My bike is still running well the only casualties being the horn, the neutral light and a hairline crack in the muffler. I have fixed the horn. The bike was filthy so I spent an hour cleaning it up, it still isn't pretty but it is half decent.

Would I ride to Bethanga again from Townsville on a Yamaha SR500? No, I would not. I've done it now. Next year I might ride my R90S all the way.