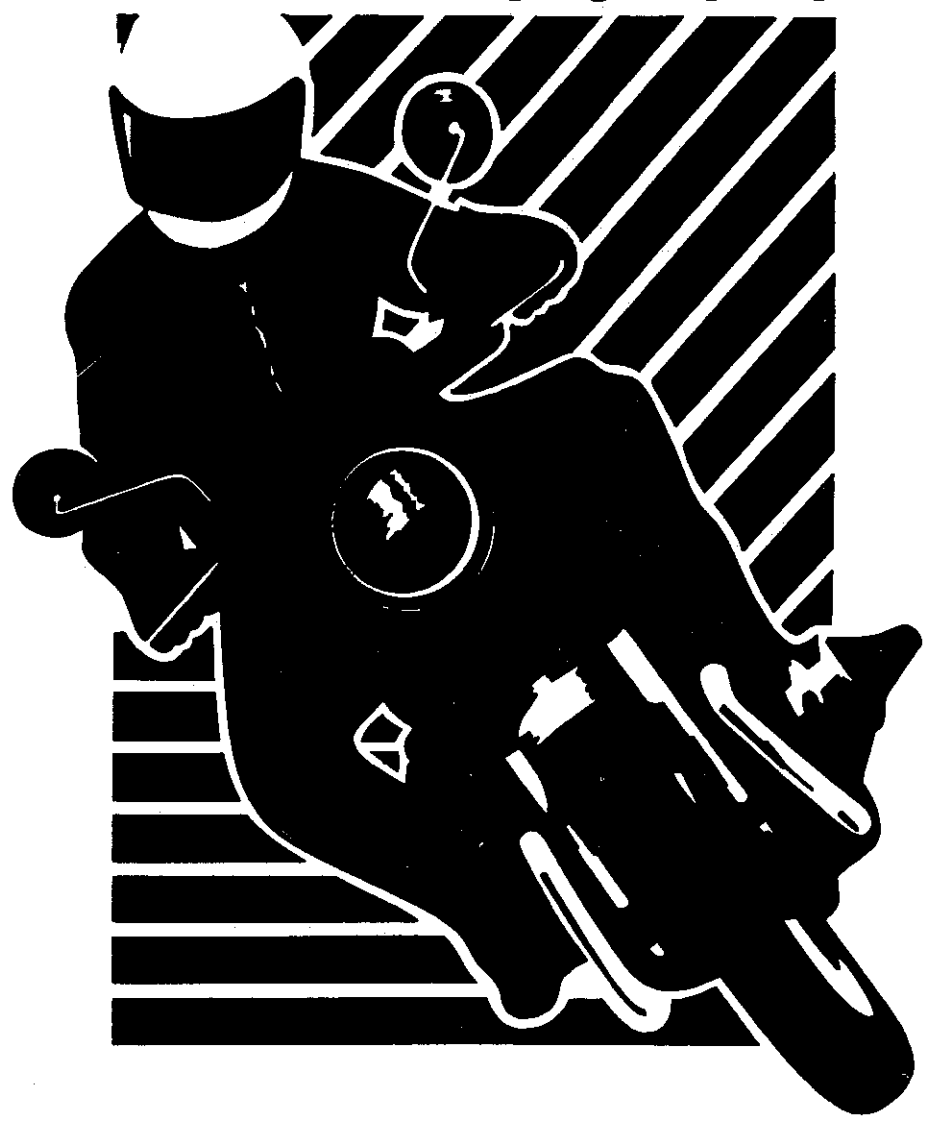


Nov 99

# Good Vibrations



**MOTORCYCLE TOURING CLUB OF VICTORIA INC.**

P.O. Box 453, Richmond 3121, Victoria

## November 1999 MTCV Itinerary

### November

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> Heathcote Pink Cliffs**

**Ian Payne** leading

9.30 am KBCP., 10.30 am Whittlesea

Come and see this eerie moonscape sculptured by gold miners and erosion with the pink tinge caused by water mixing with the high levels of iron oxide in the soil. The route is Whittlesea across to Romesy, Lancefield, Mia Mia and Heathcote. Lunch and a look at the Pink Cliffs, then home via Woodend, Mt.Macedon, Riddells Creek and Bulla.

**Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> La Porchella Lunch, 1pm**

**Danny Kosinski** leading

323 Rathdowne St Carlton, 10 am Yarra Glen

Danny on his VFR750 will lead us on a pleasant jaunt through the nearby eastern ranges before heading back to the city to meet those who have gone directly to the lunch venue. The Reefton or Black Spurs could be a possibility. Expect around 200 km for the day. La Porchella, not to be confused with the *La Porchetta* pizza chain, caters for a wide variety of tastes from wood-fired pizzas, pastas and a full menu of meat, fish and poultry.

**Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> Brisbane Ranges**

**Geoff Jones** leading

9.30 am KBCP, 10 am Laverton

The Brisbane Ranges offer great roads with little traffic. Geoff always puts on a good ride. We could find ourselves exploring further north towards Ballan, Greendale, Trentham and Daylesford. Expect around 400 km for the day.

**Thurs. 18<sup>th</sup> Social Sip – Hotel Canada, 596 Swanston St Carlton, 7 pm.**

Cheap beer, comprehensive menu, room to spread out, late closing. See you there.

**Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> Reefton Spur**

**Tim Walker** leading

9.30 am KBCP, 10.30 am Yarra Glen

The destination says it all really. Knowing Tim we'll probably end up on the Powelltown Road heading for Gippsland and more fast, twisty roads. You'll need good tyres and *Mr Sheen* to clean off the plentiful bugs this time of year. Expect around 350 km for the day.

**Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> Pyalong**

**Wayne Grant** leading

9.30 am KBCP, 10.30 am Whittlesea

Designated leisurely, Wayne will lead us around to maybe Broadford for morning tea before heading west to Pyalong and beyond. All good roads through interesting volcanic areas. Expect around 330 km for the day and an earlyish finish.

### December

**Thurs. 2<sup>nd</sup> General Meeting, Guest Speaker, 8.15 pm Club Hall, bring a plate.**

No meeting in January so you had better get along to this one!

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Registration Number A13853B

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## Captains Report for October 1999

<u>Sun 3<sup>rd</sup></u>	Destination	Phillip Island 500cc	<u>Sun 17<sup>th</sup></u>	Destination	Alexandra
	Leader	none		Leader	Ben Warden
	Weather	excellent		Weather	perfect
	No of Riders	10 members		No of Riders	22 bikes, 23 people
	Incidents	crashes		Incidents	none
	Distance	4.45 km		Distance	340 km
<u>Sun 10<sup>th</sup></u>	Destination	Aust. Trials Champ	<u>Sun 24<sup>th</sup></u>	Destination	Economy Ride
	Leader	Ben Warden		Leader	Les Leahy
	Weather	Rain, rain, rain		Weather	Cool, dry
	No of Riders	2, 5 people		No of Riders	9 bikes, 10 people
	Incidents	rain		Incidents	XL250 wins
	Distance	320 km		Distance	260 km
<u>Thurs. 21<sup>st</sup></u>	Social Sip	16 people	<u>Weekend</u>	Destination	SE NSW
			<u>30<sup>th</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup></u>	Leader	Ben Warden
<u>Thu 7<sup>th</sup></u>	General Meeting	25 people		Weather	1.5 wet, 2.5 dry
				No of Riders	5
				Incidents	Tyre wear
				Distance	2240 <sup>+</sup> km

## October Who's News

The MTCV Home Page has ..... .hmm, stopped working. Better fix that.

Seen at the **October Social Sip, The Canada**, 596 Swanston St, Carlton: Ian Payne, Rob Langer and Kirsten, Tim Walker, Ben Warden, Theo Kalkandis and Steve, Dianne Welsford, Darren, Wendy and Teagan Hosking, Rob Mattricciani and Mandy Flower, Lyn Duncan and Eddy, Danny Kosinski. There were mixed feelings about our new social sip venue. The excellent facilities let down by poor service. Also a couple of the meals were not up to standard. We will see if there are any improvements in November and January before making any decision on a change of venue.

**Andi Sirninger** is leading a girls ride on 14<sup>th</sup> November. Meet 8.30 am Brighton Kawasaki, Nepean Highway, or 9.30 am Warrandyte Bridge. Tell your friends. These rides are normally very well attended, allowing like minded women to enjoy a social ride together.

**Ian Payne** rolled into Hallam service station last Saturday, the start of the Orbost, Bombala, Walwa Epic, on a new, wait for it, Honda Fireblade! He traded the Suzuki RF900 on the Thursday. It came with headlight protectors, a rack, a Honda clock, and a tank guard. Red, white and blue tri-colour. Look out for him.

**Danny Vits** has traded his R1100S and bought a new, yellow Honda VFR800. Similarly **Jack Youdan** turned up as rear rider on the Alexandra Ride on a new, red Honda VFR800, co-incidentally purchased from the same place.

**Ben's** MTCV team ZXR750 was ready and reliable for the Bombala weekend, only being put back together at 10.45 pm the night before: fairings repaired and painted (thanks Paul), new instrument mounting bracket (\$ouch), new blinkers, a new clutch push rod seal (it was leaking), new front sprocket, newish tyres (\$ouch), new fuel pump (they only last about 70,000 km, throw away item, \$ouch), a decent set of pads (thanks Geoff), repaired and strengthened muffler/exhaust (thanks Rhys), and a new joining link. Throw in a new visor, repaired boots and new wet weather pants to complete the picture.

**Dianne Welsford** has volunteered to be the Club Social Secretary for the remainder of the Club year.

**December Meeting** is our Christmas Meeting and to help with the festivities, members are asked to bring a plate of food to share with other members.

For the **December Meeting** we will have (3<sup>rd</sup> time lucky!) **Steve Howden** from *Tiger Angel* as guest speaker.

**The Club** has again booked some unpowered sites at Mt. Buffalo Caravan Park Porepunkah for the period 26<sup>th</sup> December to 2<sup>nd</sup> January at the same location as last year. If you need to book leave then hop to it. The location provides access to great roads and many tourist attractions. The caravan park is well maintained and attractively sited on a river. About 22 MTCV people camped there last year, riding a mixture of dirt and road bikes. The township of Bright is nearby and the shopping centre caters for most basic shopping items. There is a supermarket, various restaurants, pubs, two service stations, and tourist shops. Contact any of the Committee for more details.

## OCTOBER MEETING MINUTES

Thursday 7<sup>th</sup>

- Open Meeting:** 8.20pm  
**Present:** 25 members and friends in attendance.
- Visitors:** Ian welcomed visitors: - Ravi, Mike Jude and Cheri Handforth.
- Apologies:** Danny Vitts.
- Secretary's Report:** Contents of PO Box sorted & relevant items read by Ben :-  
Spaghetti Rally flyer, VMC Minutes, Williamstown Motorcycle Club info and Omeo Shire info.
- Treasurer's Report:** As at end of September there was \$3313 in the bank.
- Captain's Report** Past and forthcoming rides previewed by Theo Kalkandis and Ian Payne. Also a reminder of the new Social Sip venue for October – Hotel Canada
- General Business:** Ian informed the group that Steve Howden from Tiger Angel was sick and would not be attending! But he also advised the group that Les Leahy had kindly accepted our invitation to give a talk on his recent trip through India aboard an Enfield Motorcycle. "Much appreciated Les especially at such short notice."
- Congratulations were extended to Robert Langer on his recent engagement to Kirsten.
- Ian welcomed ex-member Ross Bradshaw to the meeting. Ross had been in the Club for many years before leaving to concentrate on his family. But he still has his bike!
- Andi Sirninger gave a brief run down on the Girls Ride to be held on the 14<sup>th</sup> of November. About 350 km up and around the Switzerland Ranges.
- The November meeting speaker has been confirmed as Senior Constable Trevor Stowe, an instructor with the Police Motorcycle Division.
- Guest Speaker:** Life member Les Leahy gave a wonderful talk on his recent trip through India and up into the Himalayas aboard an Enfield motorcycle. He detailed the preparation, the group, the leader and some of the highlights of the trip. Watch for his article in the next magazine.
- Door Prize:** 1<sup>st</sup> – Ravi, 2<sup>nd</sup> – Les Leahy, 3<sup>rd</sup> – Rob Mattricciani, 4<sup>th</sup> – Ben Warden.
- Close Meeting:** 9.35pm

## Go Figure – Fuel Economy Ride 24/10/99

### Riders

Les Leahy <b>(Leader)</b>	Yamaha XT 600
Ian & Sherry Handforth <b>(Rear Rider)</b>	Yamaha XTZ 660
Bruce Saville	Yamaha FJ 1100
Wayne Grant	Kawasaki ZX9R
Michael Barnes	Honda XL 250
Tim Walker	Kawasaki ZX7R
Danny Vits	Honda VFR 800
Mike Jude	Triumph Trophy 900
Darren Hosking	Honda VTR 1000

kpl = kilometres per litre  
 mpg = miles per gallon (for the imperialists)  
 Multiply by 2.825 to get mpg from kpl

All figures are rounded off

Rider	Bike	Litres used	Kilometres per litre	Miles per gallon	Ranking
Ian & Sherry Handforth	Yamaha XTZ 660	6.3	19.8	56.0	6th
Bruce Saville	Yamaha FJ 1100	7.5	16.6	46.7	8th
Wayne Grant	Kawasaki ZX9R	5.00	25.0	70.0	2nd
<b>Michael Barnes</b>	<b>Honda XL 250</b>	<b>4.40</b>	<b>28.2</b>	<b>79.5</b>	<b>1st</b>
Tim Walker	Kawasaki ZX7R	5.6	22.3	63.0	5th
Danny Vits	Honda VFR 800	5.5	22.5	66.3	4th
Mike Jude	Triumph Trophy 900	5.2	23.7	66.9	3rd
Darren Hosking	Honda VTR 1000	6.7	18.5	52.3	7th

The last Economy run I attended was on the rattly KLR 650 - not the most fuel-efficient bike (read worn out piece of...). The best economy ever achieved by the KLR was around 21.3kpl/60mpg. This year I decided I had a chance. Saturday evening was spent removing minor part from the XL250, the pillion footpegs, rack and radiator scoops – every bit of weight counts, the air scoops only serve to make the tank look bigger and act as air brakes. The two spare tubes, tyre levers and various nuts, bolts and spares were also left at home. I decided the VFR 750 was not the best option, although it would have been interesting to compare figures with Danny's VFR 800.

Fine weather saw nine economic types lined up at Whittlesea. We all fuelled-up with Les casting a scrutineering eye over fuel levels. The excitement must have been high, as the attendant had to ask twice who had forgotten to pay for their fuel. It was voted that the winner would also receive the great privilege of doing the write-up.

From Whittlesea Les drew a straight line on the map and found roads to suit the 124 kilometres to the refuelling and lunch stop at Daylesford. Distance was calculated by averaging the combined trip meters. We travelled under the Hume Freeway, through Darraweit Guim (look that up on your map), through Romsey turning just before Woodend to include some of the better Mt Macedon road. Les informed me in that in over 30 years of riding with the Club this route included some roads he has never been on before. There's always a road somewhere...

Morning tea was outside the bakery at Macedon where some Harley types demonstrated how to use maximum fuel in the process of parking. Most of our discussions were on technique: was it worth braking? How much clutch-in? And do you really have to stop at 'T' intersections? (Unfortunately yes.)

Four identical blue R1s displayed how good they were at wheelies in the main street. Just the thing to impress the local populous.

From Woodend we headed to Tylden, around Upper Coliban Reservoir, back to Spring Hill via Glenlyon to Daylesford. Les managed to link some nice curvy bits with hills, corners and a good gravel section ensuring you had to vary the throttle position constantly. The average speed seemed to be about 90 kph except for the hills that were coasted down. The road bikes all seemed to roll down hills much better than the XL 250; higher tyre pressures and lower rolling resistance obviously make a difference.

The fuel stop at Daylesford revealed that the smallest bike with the least number of cylinders had won. This is the best economy I have achieved from the XL 250 – but only marginally. On the trip to the 1998 Australian GP the bike returned 27 km per litre or 76 mpg under normal riding conditions, ie not really trying to save any fuel. Commuting the consumption has reached 14.5 kpl/41 mpg.

It's worth noting the relative efficiency of Wayne's ZX9R and the fuel used by Darren's VTR. No wonder VTRs run out of fuel when pushed hard. Darren indicated that the 16-litre tank could be emptied in 180 kilometres (11.3 kpl or 32 mpg), with comments that distances as low as 160 kilometres from a tank have been seen (10kpl or 28mpg).

Tim ensured that Wayne filled his bike's tank to full capacity, although there was some discussion about how level the ground was. If there are any mathematicians out there you may wish to work out the fuel usage based on an engine capacity, number of cylinders, fuel injected versus carburetted basis. Ian's XTZ with 19.8kpl/56mpg was good, considering this was the only bike two-up.

Bruce's FJ1100 gets the gas-guzzler award; they just don't build them like they used to, or perhaps this figure relates to the riding technique used. The modern multi-cylinder bikes, including our UK entry, varied 111% (ZX7R compared to ZX9R). The overall difference was 142%. Over the 124 kilometres this meant a difference of 3.09 litres from highest to lowest consumption. Over one thousand kilometres the FJ1100 would use 60.6 litres or enough to run my bike for 1,708 kilometres! Alternatively over the 1,000 kilometres my bike would use only 35.5 litres of fuel. Of course this doesn't reflect the normal Touring Club ride. Les, as leader, is not featured, or perhaps he just didn't want to know how much it would cost him to fill that Acerbis tank.

Over leisurely lunches we discussed performance, boots and zips, trousers and zips (no bragging Mike) and how Daylesford has changed (just how many bakeries does a town need?). The comment was made that perhaps tyre cost per kilometre would be an interesting figure to consider, particularly looking at Wayne and Tim's feathered tyre edges.

Les led us on a non-economy ride back though Trentham, Blackwood, Greendale, over the Western Highway and down the very steep side of The Bluff to Glenmore past Rowsley ending in Werribee. Wayne departed along the way. At Werribee we encountered the weary 'Ride around the Bay' cyclists facing an unpleasant headwind on the final leg of their 250km journey (maybe that's why bikes have motors). At the end of the day my fuel economy on this tank-full dropped to 22.5kpl/63mpg. Not bad for the XL 250 considering the speeds travelled and wind strength in the afternoon.

An excellent day of riding without incident. Many thanks to Les for leading and Ian for rear riding. I'll be back to defend this title next time.

Michael Barnes XL 250 / VFR 750

**“WILD WESTERN” TOUR USA – CONTIKI**  
**(with a Week’s R&R in Hawaii to recover!)**

At our last meeting Les Leahy told us about his trip and how it mainly would appeal to the older more mature people, so this is what the young immature ones do in the meantime...go Contiki!! It’s my third Contiki tour so I knew what to expect, and I expected HEAPS of fun, and I got it! along with the nickname “Formula One”!

Sick of going by train into town & sitting in an office all day I wanted to get out and experience life for a while, and seeing as I only had one month’s holiday owing I had to cram as much as possible into that time.

I flew out on Sat 4.9.99 arriving over there the same day due to crossing the International Date Line. So feeling totally stuffed, at our pre-tour get-together the first night I insisted I would not be drinking that night and wanted an early night so I could “pace myself” and make it through the tour! (I’m not 21 anymore you know!) Well my insistence was met by a Southern & Coke getting put in my hand...so much for the early night...I limped to bed at 3.00am after a couple of drinks at the bar, a midnight spa, and a foot almost broken by jumping over the spa fence and landing on the square rung along the bottom of it! Great start!

We headed down to San Diego & did the touristy thing, Sea World, Pacific Beach, Tijuana, etc. and again my insistence I would leave the nightclub early to catch up on lost sleep was met by “you CAN’T go home yet”. (I realised later these people who INSISTED no-one leave early were getting their much needed early nights by SNEAKING away quietly! I was to learn!)

Phoenix was fantastic, but it was a 4.00am start for a balloon flight over the Arizona desert, took off, gorgeous, look at all the cactus and the rabbits, 20 mins later...look at all the cactus & rabbits...40 mins later, look at all the cactus & rabbits...60 mins later...you get the idea! Lovely, but in moderation (hint for people interested in balloons...if you have a sunburnt head WEAR A CAP! It gets HOT!)

Same day we did a jeep ride near Sedona, unfortunately I got a sedate driver but the scenery was still spectacular, kind of like our Outback, IMAX theatre then to the Grand Canyon rim for a “squizz”. Wasn’t in awe as everyone told me I would be. That comes when you fly over it and notice it just goes on and on, canyon within canyon etc.

Blew the budget by flying down the bottom of the Grand Canyon and riding a horse to the waterfalls. There’s the most magnificent blue-green river running along the bottom of it, looks like glacier water (and feels like it when you swim in it! Enough to freeze the balls of a brass monkey!). By this stage decide I never want to come back and work again! Had a horse that would walk when I tried to make it trot, then when I had the camcorder out he would trot! Typical yank, seems to have an attitude problem! (for any yanks reading this...JOKE!!)

Then onto Vegas, quite a spectacle, lots of casinos in different themes (eg a one-third scale of Manhattan, a “Little Venice” and “Paris”). Also some pretty wild rides, but I couldn’t take more than a couple of days there. I must admit I prefer the countryside to these touristy places, but what the hell, with a camera in one hand & camcorder in the other I qualified as a tourist so I had to see it! (Maybe that was when my voice started to go, by screaming my lungs out on the New York New York rollercoaster!)

I also got married in Las Vegas! Courtesy of Contiki for \$5! One of our “optional tours” was a \$5 “surprise”. When we hit Vegas we were told we had spare time so would pop into a chapel for a look. When we were in and seated Luca and I were dragged up the front to “become man and wife”, I’m sure that satisfied all those who said to me “you’ll probably come back with a



husband”!! In reality it was an absolute scream, cheesy lyrics made from Elvis songs, but it made a good video! We went right through from a proposal, to the vows, to yes, the kiss, to the marriage certificate. Never thought I'd end up married to a guy who lives on the other side of the world, and having a garden gnome as a baby!!

To those who are totally confused, the garden gnome “Ruby” was our “mascot” for the trip. The 7 Aussie guys who came over together borrowed him from someone's front yard, took photos of him EVERYWHERE, and will return him with the photos and a note saying “I'm home”! Well, someone had to do it!

Then onto Bass Lake where we did a day trip to Yosemite National Park. In Bass Lake we stayed in beautiful chalets on the lake and had the chance to WATER-SKI, yahoo, knew I packed my wetsuit pants for a reason! Even got the chance to learn how to use a wakeboard (emphasis on LEARN! Don't think I'm yet ready for the Moomba Masters!) It was also the site of an “international moon” by our tour guide and our bus clown! I'm planning on blackmailing the tour guide with that one, I still owe him for “marrying me off”!

Off to San Fran, more touristy stuff. Alcatraz, Lombard Street, Pier 39, another big night at the bar (a really educational write-up isn't it!!)

Santa Barbara was seen from a little 4-wheel bicycle with a steering wheel, not as much power as the motorbike but man were they a scream, especially when you go to use the handbrake and realise it's on the same side as the hand holding a camcorder! Thank goodness there were no cars coming at the time!

Santa Barbara was also THE place to party as it's apparently a “college” town and full of party animals. Well I went out with the intention of partying long and hard, however I had to break a US\$100 travellers cheque, the bar said they couldn't do it “yet”, so I had another, still couldn't break it, had a third, still couldn't break it, had a fourth... finally broke it, but was too drunk to stay longer as I had been drinking doubles and having a free one with each drink (for those who can't count, that's 8 doubles in an hour, well now I've wrecked my reputation as the fine upstanding citizen of the club, but someone had to do it!). But it was fun while I was there, if you ever want to have everyone in the bar wanting to talk to you, just be in a group of Aussies in the middle of a bar in a college town in America!! (Just try and remain in a state in which you can actually speak though!)

Then it was down the coast back to Anaheim for 5 more nights, as 12 others stayed on, including the “Sydney 7”, we hired a 15 seater and reeked havoc on Disneyland (bit of an anti-climax really, but we made our own fun), Universal Studios, Venice Beach (bit like St Kilda really, although I'm sure in St Kilda you wouldn't see a guy built like Arnold Schwarzenegger in an electric blue lycra superman suit on rollerblades!), Beverley Hills (where we ‘fitted in’ like mopeds in Grand Prix! We still were treated wonderfully though, Chapel Street could take lessons!), Hollywood (where we wondered if we'd make it back to the van without getting mugged) and saw a baseball game and an absolutely hilarious ice-hockey game which was more like a boxing tournament.

Made heaps of friends and hated saying good-bye but these things come to an end (but I have 16 rolls of films and 7 tapes of video to remember them by!, and I'm still making copies to send all those who requested them), so it was off to Hawaii to recover. Well apart from the quad bikes, the helicopter, the submarine, the glider, the catamaran and the motorbike I spent heaps of time floating around on a lilo in Waikiki Beach. I vote it the best beach in the world as you can float for an hour and not drift out, not drift in, and hardly move further down the beach. That's RELAXING (and all the navy boys walking along the beach displaying their “pecs” provided the exercise, it's hard work turning the neck that much!). However I did find the fact that there were only ever 1 or 2 English-

speaking people doing the activities a little disconcerting, you seem to have to know Japanese to go to Hawaii! There's more Japanese there than in Japan!

As for the motorbike (probably the first paragraph to get your interest in this write-up...sorry, but wasn't a bike holiday so there was no "bike talk", and to tell you the truth I loved the break), I hired a GPX250 in Hawaii (I couldn't bring myself to pay AUS\$400 for a 600 when I can ride one back home for free so I made do with the cheapest motorbike), but when I asked for a helmet they only had Large! Well as that spins around my head more than the New York New York rollercoaster I went helmet-less and got more crows feet around my eyes, bug-splats on my face, and stung by droplets of rain to start off with, but once I got used to it, and got on the slower roads, I quite adjusted to no helmet and really loved it (with the exception of when I got caught in a downpour in the afternoon...ah the joys of riding around a tropical island with the wind in your hair!).

Well that's it in a nutshell, it's that or show you 7 hours of video tape, so this is the better option! That's it for another goodness-knows-how-many-years till another overseas trip, (though I'll be too old for Contiki soon, wish those damned Tatts people would get the numbers right!), so enjoy the break from my rambling for awhile and see you on future rides (but don't sit behind me as mentally I'm still bobbing away on a lilo in Waikiki!!)

Dianne (CBR600, GPX250, Quadbiking, Ballooning, Helicoptering, Horseriding, Waterskiing, Wakeboarding, Cycling, Catamaraning, Submarining, Gliding, touring, Spa-addict, social-drinking, extraordinaire!!)

PS: And unfortunately for you all, I have got my voice back which I lost for awhile in Hawaii!!

PSS: Ah yes, there was one thing I DIDN'T do on the tour...drink coffee. They can't make a decent coffee to save themselves, I knew there was a reason I came home!! My bloodstream was screaming out for it's caffeine!

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## Alexandra - Sunday 17th October

Ben – ZXR750 (leader)	Darryn – TL1000	Dianne – CBR600	#Luche – R6 #
Jack – VFR800 (r/rider)	Ray – GSXR750	Dave – 748SP	#Dave – ZX7R
#David – 900SS	Paul – YZF600	Ian – RF900	Wayne – ZX9
Craig – YZF750	Lynn – GSXR750	#Eddie – CBR250	Bruce – FJ1100
Tim – ZX7R	Rhys – ZX7R	Darren – ZX7R	#Warwick FZR1000
#Rob & Al VTR1000	Derek – FZR1000		

23 people, 22 bikes, 16 members.

As Darren Morcomb could not lead this ride, Ben had volunteered his services. I joined the group at Yarra Glen and had already met Dave, Rob and Al up at the servo. As expected with the perfect weather, a large group had assembled. Ben explained the corner marking system, Jack attached the emergency kit to his new VFR800 and we were away.

We headed out of town via the back Healesville Road, then up Chum Creek Road to Toolangi and down Myers Creek road to Healesville. By this time most of us were in the groove so the Black Spur was most welcome, especially as there was limited traffic and the road was in excellent condition. I was keeping close company with Paul and Craig and it was great to follow them, as Craig would pass some cars then signal 'the-all-clear' when it was safe for us to pass. We continued on together for the fast run up into Marysville: "sensational".

We stopped outside the Bakery where ample cakes, coffee and conversation were consumed. Next stop Eildon, so top up the petrol and we were on our way. Due to other commitments Dave, Darryn, David, Lynn, Eddie and Wayne did not continue. A quick sprint to Buxton where en-route there were a few heart flutters when an innocent looking 4WD turned out to be Mr. Plod! We continued on to Taggerty where we temporarily lost Bruce after he sped past Ben just before the turn-off.

Onto Thornton and then just past Snobs Creek we turned onto the exciting Jamieson Road. Along this section Ben had waved a few of the lads on as he was having trouble negotiating 'right-handers', partly due to his recent accident but also because the bent exhaust was making the muffler rub against the swing arm. Perhaps it was just as well as they had a bit of a scare with an oncoming L-plater driving a Falcon and using all of the road was encountered mid corner. In fact Warwick had to take to the dirt to avoid the offending vehicle.

We reached the end of the bitumen with everyone raving about this great road. Rob was the only one complaining but only about his young son. The abundance of corners and the extra weight of a pillion had made it hard work changing direction! After a bit of a breather we had to go back and do it all again!

We continued on to Eildon and over lunch heard all about Dianne's recent trip to America. But all too soon lunch was over and we were on our way heading for Kinglake West. Firstly across the magic road through Fraser National Park to Alexandra, then the 'fast' stretch across to Molesworth. By this stage our numbers had dwindled further with the departure of Dianne, Darren, Jack, Tim and Rhys. We continued on to Yea and a chance meeting with Tom and Andi. They had been out pre-riding Andi's "Girls Ride" and not having been on a road bike for close to 4 months they enthusiastically latched on for the run down to Kinglake West where the ride broke up. Thanks to Ben for leading and Jack and Ray for the rear riding duties.

Thanks also to Tom and Andi for inviting me back for some tea and cake and thanks to Andi for allowing me to ride her Yamaha R1. Although I only rode it for a short distance it still impressed me with its comfort and effortless power. What a bike!

Ian Payne (Suzuki RF900)

## Australian Trials Championships, Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> October

**Riders:** Ben Warden (ZXR750), Geoff Barton (R100GS)

In Victoria, October is the wettest month of the year statistically, and, sure enough it was cold, wet, and miserable. Geoff and I considered our options at Whittlesea, 9.30 am (no KBCP pickup) and decided to venture forth into the murk.

Geoff had already done in the vicinity of 150 km from Loch after milking the cows at some time that doesn't exist for normal bed-loving mortals. He's keen. In fact he's already clocked up 85,000 km on his ex demo BM, and is in the market for a new bike. Mind you the BM is onto its second gear box (before Geoff), and recently clutch and head gaskets. Hmm. Whenever Danny Vits rings me up he's been out riding with Geoff. Danny had a few serious problems with his BM and has traded it in on a new VFR. To be fair, the vibration and /or seating position contributed to the changeover. Them wrists ain't what they used to be. I digress.

We burbled along at a fair clip, passing the odd car now and again, the ZXR liking the cold, moist air, purring along happily. From Wallan it was up and down the narrow twisties to Romsey, a spot of highway to Lancefield, diverging towards Lake Eppalock and then the narrow, bumpy 37 km to Mia Mia. South to Redesdale, across to Sutton Grange, followed the sign posts to Jennings Hill and the Trials site, some 10 km from the Calder Highway. All up about 140 km from Whittlesea.

About 200 cars were parked in the paddock, which moved about underfoot due to the swollen-with-water state it was in. The guys on the gate took our \$5 entrance fee and handed us an empty can to put under our bike's side stands. We made about the eighth road bikes there. Not a big following amongst the sport riders it appears! A trek to *the tents* marked the beginning of what was to be a quite interesting day.

After purchasing a can of drink we began the long march up Jennings Hill to the first of the trials stages. The 'track' was laid out in about 14 sections distributed over 3 or 4 km up and around the mountain. Each section, in non-technical terms, consisted of a pile of rocks, boulders and marked paths which had to be negotiated before riding the next section. The riders completed 3 laps for the day. Points were deducted for putting a foot down (1 point, maximum of three points per section), stopping (1, maximum of 3 per section) or crashing. A maximum of 5 points per section was allowed. The rider with the least points for the day wins. Simple. Points are deducted by observers with basic hand signals.

The riders were divided up into categories from expert (red) to novice (white) and side car. The expert riders included the internationals (England, New Zealand) and they got to do the really tricky and dangerous stuff, and consequently were the most entertaining to watch.

Geoff and I wandered around together in the mist and sometimes rain, occasionally clear, stopping at each section before moving on and upwards. A crowd of 100 people or so had accumulated at a particularly difficult section containing a bolder about 2 metres high, undercut, or vertical at best. It looked impossible, given that the riders had almost no room to attack it. Suffice to say that about 1 in 5 of the Expert riders managed to get up it. The riders that failed either scrambled half way up the rock and came tumbling down with the bike on top of them, or, gave it up as a bad joke and avoided the rock altogether! Often there was someone standing at

the top of the rock who grabbed the front wheel of the normally riderless bike, to give the rider time to escape the falling, revving bike. A great cheer and spontaneous applause was heard around the mountain when a rider did succeed in conquering the beast. A very impressive feat.

Riders manoeuvre their bikes by jumping up and down on the suspension and 'hopping' the bike like a pogo stick, changing direction in mid air. Incredible balance and skill are exhibited. The best we heard about was the English World Champion stalling, and then kick starting the bike while remaining on it, stopped. His foot never touched the ground. Try that at home.

At another section, Geoff and I sat in our full wet weathers, backs resting on a rock, and watched riders ride up a 10 metre high near vertical wall, stop and twist to the right at the top, and continue on. The rock face had a steep, downhill, rocky, grass lead up to it. Some of the riders queried us to whether people actually rode up it, and how much run-up was required. Quite bemusing really. Even they were scared!

On our way back we ran into Bruce Saville who had driven, and a few minutes later Lyn and Eddie, who had also driven. Working as detailers, Lyn and Eddie are not too keen to ride in the wet these days, as they try to keep their bikes spotless. Geoff and I watched a few more crashes at *the* rock with the others before continuing our descent, as the others continued their ascent.

Near the bottom, during the course of the day, a muddy farmer's gate had developed into a bog hole the depth of an axle. Riders, not realising the depth, were ploughing into it headlong just as they had done on other occasions, and crashing spectacularly, mud everywhere. A woman went straight over the top of her handle bars as we watched. A crowd had formed and were really enjoying themselves. There was no way around this bog hole, and it was only getting worse, or better, depending on your perspective! Even the side cars were getting bogged.

Back at *tent city* Geoff and I ordered a hamburger and steak sandwich. I should have forgone the extra 50 cents and had the steak sandwich. If I wasn't so hungry, and we weren't in the middle of nowhere ...

Now to get the bikes out. The single entry to the car park was now foot deep, mud, wheel ruts. Fat front and rear bike tyres with barely millimetres of tread are not designed for such conditions. We made it, and the one kilometer or so of sandy dirt road back to glorious bitumen. (I *had* to hose the bike when I got home, leaving about 2 kg of mud and sand on the concrete when I had finished.)

Fifty kilometers down the road at Woodend, Geoff and I bid our farewells, as I headed off to visit some friends down another dirt road, and Geoff headed back to Loch for the milking.

All in all quite an interesting day with plenty of skill and enthusiasm on display. Not your normal sort of Club ride, but something different, and gives you an appreciation for another aspect of motorcycling. Thanks Geoff for making the effort, and for Bruce, Lyn and Eddie similarly for making the effort. Shame about the weather. Maybe a Club minibus would be an option.

Ben Warden (Kawasaki ZXR750)

# Anatomy of a High-Side An Intimate Look at an Ugly Event

by Kevin Cameron -- <http://www.motograndprix.com/>

For many years, the dominant type of crash in road racing was the low-side, or slide-out, typically occurring on the entry to a corner. As the machine was leaned into the turn, one or both tyres lost grip and the machine fell on its low side. Machine and rider then slid off the track on a tangent.

Today's situation is different. Something like 80 percent of racing crashes now occur on corner exit, during the acceleration phase. These are so-called high-side crashes, in which the rear tyre lets go during off-corner acceleration, the back end slides suddenly outward, and then the rear tyre suddenly regains grip. The machine's sideways kinetic energy is converted into a violent flip that throws the rider off - over the high side.

This switch in crash type has been caused by a combination of tyre development and horsepower growth, and the change in riding style that both have brought about.

## 100 Horsepower at Daytona

The process began with the tyre crisis of Daytona 1972, when the best available tyres proved unequal to transmitting 100 hp on a high-speed banked track. Larger section tyres with round profiles and softer rubber compounds were then developed by Dunlop to solve this problem.

At the end of 1973, Goodyear tested primitive slicks, and the following year, round-profile slick tyres became essential in US F-750-style racing. The slick revolution spread from there, as two-stroke 500GP bikes reached, and then far surpassed, the 100-hp level.

## Chassis and Tyres are Interrelated

Every time tyre grip is improved, tyre loads become better able to flex and twist the chassis parts. To the degree that they are springy, chassis are able to store flex energy during cornering in a process riders call 'wind-up'. If a tyre breaks traction, the energy stored in the 'wound-up' chassis and suspension is suddenly released. The resulting snap kills any residual grip that the sliding rear tyre may have.

A distinction has to be made here between the normal motions of suspension, which are controlled by a damper, and those of chassis flex, which have essentially no damping. When a tyre breaks traction, the suspension attached to it extends, but only at a rate controlled by the damper, and adjustable as a normal tuning variable. At the same time, the energy stored in chassis flex is also released. Because it has no damping, its release is uncontrolled and extremely rapid, tending to prevent the tyre from regaining its grip immediately. The steady increase in tyre grip has therefore been one driving force pushing chassis design towards higher stiffness.

There is also a trend in the opposite direction. During the past five years, GP teams and designers have been exploring the value of relaxed chassis stiffness. This has been done to provide a supplement to the normal suspension - particularly in corners. As the machine leans over, its normal suspension is tilted so far out of the plane in which bumps act (the vertical) as to become much less effective. Under these conditions, the flexibility of fork legs, swing-arm, and other chassis parts provides some compliance, acting as a lateral suspension. Experiments with added flexibility have revealed both gains in corner grip and losses in stability, so the Holy Grail is to find exactly which kinds of flex are useful. This design issue remains open.

## Maximum Radius versus Point and Shoot

In the classical cornering style of the 1950s and 1960s, the era Dunlop engineer Tony Mills has called "hard rubber", riders sought the largest possible turn radius in a given corner, and then traversed it at a constant speed, close to the traction limit.

The current era of wide, sticky tyres has created an entirely different style - one based not upon tiptoeing around a constant radius at constant speed, but upon maximum acceleration. When you have both traction and horsepower, high-corner speed is no longer the best strategy. Better lap times result instead from maximizing speed onto the next straight. This is done by getting the turning done early, on a less than maximum radius, saving the rest of the turn to be straightened out for use as a drag strip for rapid acceleration. Riders call this 'squaring-off the corner'. It is

during this strong, off-corner combined acceleration and turning that the high-side (the dominant accident type of our era) so often occurs.

### **Lean Angle, Throttle and Traction**

As the rider turns the throttle to begin acceleration out of a corner, rear-wheel thrust increases. This, in turn, transfers weight off the front tyre, onto the rear, creating more grip that can in turn accept more throttle. On a properly designed motorcycle, accelerating hard, just enough load remains on the front tyre to enable the rider to steer and hold line. He therefore exits the corner mainly on the rear tyre, with only a few percent of total load on the front tyre. If the engine's power curve is a smooth one, without steep regions of rise, and if track grip is likewise predictably good, this fine balance can be maintained, resulting in a strong drive out of the corner.

If power is not smooth, or if traction is irregular, the rear tyre may exceed the traction limit. When it does, it no longer generates enough side-grip to hold the back of the machine on the corner line. The back 'steps out'. The loss of driving force also causes more load to transfer back to the front tyre, which as a result grips better and slides less.

The result is a sudden yaw motion of the machine. The rear tyre swings toward the outside of the turn, while the front holds line. Ideally, the rider quickly reduces throttle, and the increased friction of sliding sideways slows the outward motion of the back of the bike. The rear tyre suddenly grips again. If the rear of the bike has only slid out slightly before hooking up again, the result is like a sideways thump to the back of the bike.

This causes a violent oscillation called weave, at a frequency of about two to three cycles per second. This is often visible when a rider, accelerating out of a corner as hard as he can, momentarily loses rear traction. His bike gives a sudden shake, and then continues. Typically, the stiffer the chassis, the more quickly such wiggles die away.

If the back tyre does not quickly regain grip, the rear end of the bike continues to swing out rapidly, accumulating angular momentum. Instead of lying down, as in a low-side, gyroscopic forces tend to right the bike. This makes it likely that the rear tyre will regain grip. When it does so, all of this yaw angular momentum (machine rotating around a vertical axis) is transformed into a sudden roll movement (machine rotating around the line drawn between front and rear tyre footprints) flipping the machine upright, tossing the rider violently over it. Over the high-side.

### **The Randy Mamola Rodeo Save**

In lesser versions of this same accident, a very athletic rider may manage to keep his grip on the bars but his head and upper body are hurled through the windscreen, or his legs are thrown off the bike to the outside. Randy Mamola's on-film rodeo ride must certainly be the most memorable.

Wayne Gardner was famous for returning from practice with his windscreen missing. Incredible feats are sometimes seen as riders somehow regain control from beside, or in front of, their sliding oscillating machines after a near high-side. Riders report moments of "looking through the front wheel spokes", or "skating beside their machines", as they try to leap back on. These incidents are semi-controlled high-sides.

High-side accidents were common in the period 1988 to 1992, leading to the predictable calls for rule changes. In fact, GP bike manufacturers already had the cure in process - in the form of electronic engine controls. These, by smoothing engine torque delivery during acceleration, made it easier for riders to control the acceleration process.

Since then, the coming of close-firing-order or 'big-bang' engines has further brought the acceleration process under rider control. In conclusion, the combination of these measures has made 500cc GP bikes rideable by a wider circle of riders, and has reduced the frequency of high-side accidents.

## INDIA on a Royal Enfield, August 1999

After one and a half years of letters, phone call, pass-port photos, duplicate photos and documents, countless injections, more letters and yet more phone calls; in August of this year, 1999, I finally made it to India.

The sole purpose was a motorcycle safari through the Himalaya of V-E-R-Y northern India. I had signed on with Mike Ferris who runs his tour operation out of Sydney, Australia. For 3 weeks we would ride 'Royal Enfield' 500cc motorcycles, with a back-up van carrying our gear and two Indian motorcycle mechanics with a shop-full of spare parts. Our accommodation would run the whole gamut from a ritzy up-market hotel to hike tents with 2mm thick sleeping mats.

Early in the preparations I telephoned two long-time motorcycle mates. Peter Knudsen is an engineering draughtsman with the Tully shire council in Far North Queensland. Peter is single and has never been outside Australia; but "The Nud" is a tough man with a map and a motorbike. Ian Jensen is creative director of an advertising agency in Brisbane, married with 3 grown children. "Jenno" has been most places around the world and is relentless when he's on the business end of a video camera. Neither of them hesitated when invited to go. These are my riding notes from the Himalaya; the adventure of a lifetime.

### **Sunday night :**

It is 1am and the aircraft cabin door closes with a thump. We taxi out into the darkness, and in a rush of acceleration I'm on my way to India.

Seven hours later the Boeing 777 lands in the first glow of dawn at Changi International Airport. Having gone from 8<sup>o</sup>C to 28<sup>o</sup>C I discard the Melbourne thermal gear and catch a bus into Singapore. It's 8:30am on the dot when I amble across the foyer of the colonial Albert Court Hotel to greet the figure slumped in an armchair.

"Dr Knudsen I presume?" It is 15 years since Peter and I rode bikes together, but I knew that he'd want to do the trip. Peter's friends in Cairns insisted that he have breakfast at Raffles Hotel, but nothing happens at Raffles 'till after 11am, so we did the next best think and ate around the corner.

The day was spent pleasantly searching out the market places in town, eating bizarre tropical fruit, and drinking barley lager.

Late in the afternoon I slipped \$10 to the driver of the airport bus and we were on our way back to Changi. Ian Jensen, on a direct flight from Brisbane, had arrived in bad shape. His head exploding from a combination of the 'flu' and the pressurized cabin, and still the agony of another flight to go.

Flight SQ408 to Delhi carries 3 other Safari riders. Di and Peter from Sydney and Maurice from Perth. Five hours later we land on the sub-continent at 11pm to heat, intense humidity, and even more intense smells.

Our 'Hotel Broadway' exudes all the charm of a Manila doss house and I slide into bed at 12:30am.

### **Tuesday :**

Up at 5:30am for an early train from Delhi to Chandigarh. The train passes through 250 kilometers of green, rich farming land. Not our usual preconceived impression of India. The carriage is the temperature of a cold-storage room, so Jenno and I go out onto the carriage connection and open the door.

Fantastic! Standing on the running board having the sights and smells of India rush by at 100k.p.h.



The Royal Enfield 500cc motorcycles are waiting for us in the railway parking lot at Chandigarh. A head count reveals 9 blokes, 1 lady, the 'Trail Boss' and a back-up vehicle. Now for the first taste of India traffic, with my feet on the wrong side and upside down. (The foot control pedals are English style.)

Chandigarh to Shimla is a display of switchback narrow roads winding up precipitous green mountains. But it is modern and commercial (by Indian standards) a cross between the Blue Mountains and the Dandenongs. Then, at 6,000 ft. Shimla, the vertical town.

Tonight I'm lying in bed at the hotel. The large window contains a totally vertical mural of an illuminated, time-forgotten town of the British Raj with the Church-of-England cathedral spotlighted right at the very top.

### **Wednesday :**

A 6am walk alone through the alleys of Shimla is very rewarding. The town stirring at 7am with carriers hauling very heavy loads of agricultural produce up the tiny near-vertical staircase into the ancient market-places.

Our departure from the Hotel takes us back through the usual morning traffic jam and soon has us slithering in light drizzle along greasy suburban tracks, dodging water buffalo, holy cows and the odd stray dog or monkey. Today the roads will be much narrower and rougher but with less traffic. Eventually we descend out of the mist and clouds and pound our way along single width bitumen village roads of questionable construction.

With every hour on the bike I grow more confident with the gear change and braking procedure, and am giving the Enfield "the berries". Lunch is at a very laid back Indian pub cantilevered out over a ravine with the river cascading far below us. Our reputation as energetic eaters is beginning to grow as we devour yet more dishes of local tucker. The afternoon run to our overnighter at Mandi is a leaderless ride (Trail Boss is confident we can't go wrong) with a few of us stretching the legs of the 500cc singles out to 90 k.p.h!!! the roads being much smoother and open.

The green, green valley before me could be New Guinea, with tiny buildings perched above the banks of the rushing river. It is, however, still 'modern' India with comparative luxury for our overnight accommodation.

### **Thursday :**

Today is supposed to be an easy ride of spectacular scenery from Mandi to Manali. Well... it was, until 3 kilometers out of town the over-hanging cliff face has collapsed onto the narrow road. A land slip. Already the traffic has jammed the road on both sides of the blockade. We move the motorbikes to the head of the queue and wait. An hour and a half later the dozer has cleared enough for bikes and 4 WD trucks to clamber across the rubble and be on their way to ease some of the congestion.

Manali is a tourist town for India's own people. At 6,000 ft, it has a multitude of hotels, apartments, lodges for the summer season and of course, at that altitude, huge falls of snow in winter. How do I possibly explain country-side that looks like a facsimile of Switzerland yet is located in India?

Winding up through the almost vertical sided, emerald green valleys I am trying to find ways to describe this atypical landscape when we come to another halt for our second land-slip of the day. This is a big one and will take several hours to clear even with two large hydraulic backhoes. It is also a public holiday which means even more people than usual (for India) on the roads.

The next 2 1/2 hours are an education. We find out and experience more of India than in all the trip so far. There is nothing like an extended traffic-jam to learn about people. As soon as there is a tiny gap in the land-slip rubble a great cheer goes up and all the push-bikes, motor scooters, motor-bikes and of course the "Ferris Wheels" contingent surge forward. The road on the other side is a wall of trucks stretching for 5 kilometers and passing through one village. With clutches slipping and motors red hot from the less-than-walking speed, we ride down gutters and squeeze through gaps that would do an anorexic ferret proud.

I can't believe this. This is India, the epitome of wonderful chaos. Incredibly we all survive with only one bike tangling with the tailgate of a truck and toppling over. Our support vehicles will take 4 1/2 hours before they even turn a wheel.

Today, at the blockades, we saw our first feral westerners. Have dread-locks and back-pack, will travel. A pity they are 30 years too late. But marijuana grows wild in Manali so that's why they come.

### **Saturday :**

Some 20 kilometers from Manali is the Rohtang La (the first of many passes) at an altitude of 12,000 feet. Today is the start of serious geographical grandeur. We have no scale in Australia to even commence a comparison, or adjectives in common usage to describe this landscape. I begin the ride as Julie Andrews with the 'Hills are alive' etc., progress to 'Marlboro Man' with the herdsmen's mountain horses and finish in a scene from 'Star Wars' with glacier constructions from outer space.

Even Keylong (our overnight village) has surprised me. Its people, of more Tibetan appearance, are just wonderful.

Tonight I watch an absolutely full moon rise over the Himalaya.

### **Sunday :**

From Keylong to Leh is 354 kilometers which our Trail Boss has allocated to 3 days of riding. Over this section there is no fuel and no accommodation, so our following van is very important.

Today we climb the Baralacha La, at 15,000 ft. the forth-highest road in the world. As far as the eye can see in every direction is rock: mountains of rock, valleys of rock. Not a blade of grass or tree as we are above the vegetation line. Some of our riders are suffering dizziness but apart from a slight headache I'm feeling fine. For lunch we stop at Darcha where there are just 4 parachute tents on a stony plain. These tents act as shops and eating-places for travelers and truck drivers. Ours is run by a lady called Pemba with a wonderful Tibetan face.

I am first bike onto the police checkpoint at Sarchu (the border of Kashmir) and as the officer inspects my passport it begins to lightly snow. An amazing thing for me to travel halfway-round the world, to stand in a desert of stone, and have snow fall on my jacket.

### **Monday :**

Crawling out of the sleeping bag to attend to a call of nature at about 2am, I am rewarded with the brightest moonlight ever. I walk over the tent ropes as if it were daylight. The collection of tents in the middle of no-where is an answer to the lack of any accommodation. Out stone desert and mountain road takes us over a double pass with a saddle between. This is the Lachlung La and it is 16,000 feet. There are no guard-rails, the road is only 3 meters wide and the drop-offs are enough to induce vertigo. From time to time there are sections of hand-laid bitumen, but most of the time we ride on rock and dirt. Food for today is a bowl of soup and japarti (Indian bread) mid-morning. There are no more food facilities until that night.

Before us now lies the only flat road in the Himalaya, the More Plains, which extend for 45 kilometers. Reminiscent of Mongolia this valley plain, with sparse vegetation, is home to small groups of semi-nomadic herdsmen. We eventually come to their flock of sheep and goats. With our Indian interpreter riding pillion on 'Trail Boss' motorbike, we head cross-country to find their tents. After several kilometers we are successful, park respectfully some distance away, and wait for these Tibetan people to indicate that we are welcome. I am very conscious of going back a thousand years in a single moment.

Time here is meaningless as I am invited into one of the yak hair woven tents. All their little "homely" things are set out not unlike we would do, with faded photographs of the Dalai Lama in tiny frames. An iron stove is in the centre on the gravel floor with mats spread around the perimeter. This yak-hair tent is no larger than a tiny western kitchen and is home to 9 people. I step back outside into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and wonder how long their lifestyle will be allowed to continue.

Further on we are to climb the Taglang La. At over 17,000 ft it is the second highest road in the world. Some of our group (notably those fond of eating, drinking and smoking) are already suffering from altitude sickness. I put on the waterproofs and balaclava. Soon I am climbing the foothills of the pass on treacherous mud and rock. It is the roughest track I have ridden so far, and the Royal Enfield is struggling in first gear. Soon it is snowing and out of the mist come three yaks with snow on their long-haired backs. The sight will stay with me forever.

Some of our group crash at slow speed but everyone eventually makes it to the top. Congratulations are shared all round, and no one has spat-the-dummy. Well done.

The descent into the Ladakh valley is frightening. Two wheel ruts in the muddy rocks. I'm amazed that our tour leader has had only a couple of bikes go over the edge in 5 years (fortunately the riders bailed out in time). Once at the bottom we enter a different and almost biblical world. The narrow valley is like a Brueghel painting with peasants reaping tiny stone-walled plots of grain. We are now in Buddhist territory and clay 'chortens' dot the hillsides.

Our Trail Boss stops with some concern that we have not yet reached the over-night tents. He sends me on ahead to do some reconnaissance work, but no luck. Oh, well. This is India, remember. The exhausted troops are asked if they are able to ride the remaining 100 kilometers to Leh. No one complains. Two hundred and sixty kilometers on some of the most demanding roads in the world, on antique motorcycles, in a single day.

#### **Thursday :**

The only road north of Leh was built by the military to halt China's advance any further than Tibet. Special permits are required for us to enter this area, but it is worth it as we are about to make an assault on the highest motorable road in the world. Yes, this is the big one, the Kardung La at 18,380 feet. This is the only time we will return over the same road on the entire trip, but if we kept going it would be to either China or Russia.

Kardung La is only 50 kilometers from Leh, but in this short distance we increase in altitude by 8,000 ft. Today the last 10 kilometers are being constructed by road workers. This involves throwing rocks resembling half-broken house bricks onto the track to a depth of 400mm. Eventually (if you're lucky) a heavy roller gives the whole plot a once-over flattening, then hot bitumen is poured on by hand.

We had the misfortune to ride up and back over some 6 kilometers of thrown rocks before the rolling process. Trail Boss informed us on our descent that this was by far the toughest the ride had ever been. Four of our number crashed today, but so far I have managed to keep my mighty 'Enfield' butter-side up.

### **Friday :**

At last we are on the road again. Heading west takes us along the Indus valley. This is the first tedious countryside we have encountered, heavily populated by the world's ugliest Army barracks. Eventually we turn at Khalsi and abruptly ascend at an alarming rate. These are the tightest, steepest switchbacks I've ever ridden. Within a few kilometers we are catapulted 3,000 feet upward. What an amazing change to the ride. Soon we arrive at tonight's "tent camp" above Lamayuru.

This medieval village is the home of the Kagyupa Gompa, the oldest Buddhist temple in the Ladakh region and was originally built in the 10<sup>th</sup> century. We are fortunate to be allowed entrance to its interior. Late in the day Ian Jensen and I return to the village hundreds of feet below for some photography. A real bonus is watching the villagers returning from the fields amidst lengthening shadows. Their reaping tools, their costume, their method of carrying the cut grain.... Nothing has changed since the original gompa was built all those years ago.

### **Saturday :**

This will be a tough day for numerous reasons, so we are out of the tents at very first light, breakfast at 6am and on the road by 6:30am. I'm now an old hand with altitude and passes as I skim over the Fatu La at a meager 14,000 feet and head towards Kargil. There are reported to be 17,000 Indian troops in Kargil and it is only a handful of kilometers from the line of demarcation with Pakistan.

We could be refused entry along this stretch of road, or we could be shelled by Pakistani Artillery. Instead we are caught in just another diabolical Indian traffic jam.

Soon I am riding along the Suru Valley lined with artillery guns under camouflage nets, soldiers with automatic rifles sitting on rocks and endless convoys of Indian Army Leyland trucks. Getting through the "war-zone" was to be the highlight of the day, but I should have known better. With only 60 kilometers from the lunch stop to our overnight stay at Sonamarg I thought it would be easy.

I hadn't counted on the Zoji La at 11,000 feet. While not particularly high in comparison with other passes, the Zoji Las are the most dangerous descent I have ever ridden. Imagine the landscape of Switzerland (complete with snow) and a 2 wheel-rut Indian dirt road. This track is combination of loose stones and bull-dust 150mm deep. All this, teetering on the edge of precipices, with thousands of feet to the valley floor below. Throw in a convoy of some 300 army lorries and supply trucks driven by maniacal Indian drivers coming in the opposite direction giving no quarter to anything as insignificant as a motorcycle.

This bizarre scene of near hysteria was played out in the most beautiful scenery I have encountered.

### **Sunday :**

From the Alpine surroundings of Sonamarg, today's ride to Srinagar could be considered a doodle, only 100 kilometers. But today is voting day for the Indian national election. Because we are still in Kashmir this means a very heavy military presence. Combine this with an energetic Police presence and more than the normal number of people on the road and we have a politically sensitive ride on our hands. Automatic rifles are everywhere. Our back-up jeep is pulled over once for a metal detector test, and 3 check points call the bikes in for a friendly chat.

Our destination is the Royal Kashmir Group of Houseboats courtesy of Mr Ibrahim Thulla, Dal Lake, Srinagar, Kashmir. The proprietor of our accommodation is so concerned for our safety that he has sent his son up by bus to guide our vehicles and the bikes through the outer roads of Srinagar

to avoid the congestion of down-town. The ride is remarkable as we see suburban life in its endless variety. At last, there it is. Dal Lake in all its deteriorating post-English Raj glory.

We park the bikes. Hail some Indian shikara (gondola) and swan across the shallow, calm water to our home for two evenings. The ancient decorative English furniture, the faded and patched regal carpet, the salt and peppershakers from the Great Gatsby. All around us 'decay' from a grand colonial era. Amazing.

### **Monday :**

This morning I awake to Islamic chants amplified across the city by loudspeakers at 4:45am. Oh well, not to worry; we have to be dressed and ready for the shikara at 5:30am anyway. Silently we glide off into the cool half-light of early morning. Each day at 6am there is a vegetable market held on the back alley waterways of Lake Dal. Imagine Victoria Market on canoes. Some hundred or more boats all milling around in a frenzy. Half of them full of vegetable produce to sell and half of them empty and ready to purchase for the restaurants of Srinagar.

Paddles slapping the water, vegetables being weighed out by hand-held scales, bargaining, shouting, not a cash register or computer check-out in sight. Incredible.

### **Tuesday :**

National Highway 1A runs right across India. Today we travel south-east from Srinagar to the pretty hill-top holiday resort of Patnitop. The term "national highway" should be regarded as a gross exaggeration and my reflexes are working over-time dodging Tata trucks, Army buses, cows and pedestrians, all intent upon leaping out in front of me at the worst possible moment. Today, however, is very special because we get to travel through the Jawahar tunnel.

This is a 2.5 kilometer long tunnel right through the mountain, linking highway one on this side with highway one on the other side. I am astounded to think that the military might of India has to pass through a one-way tunnel with leaking ceiling, uneven wet floor and a handful of lights. The police alternate the direction of traffic from each side every half-hour. Fortunately the bikes are directed to the front of the queue and we watch as diesel smoke and fumes belch out of this very small hole in a very big mountain.

The traffic has been halted from the other side; the Police wave their arms and blow whistles. We are off! Eleven bikes plunge into Dante's Inferno. Instant panic. My eyes have gone from intense sunshine into total blackness. The Royal Enfield's headlight can be likened to that of a handful of glow-worms in a glass jar, and its beam is directed somewhere halfway up the wall.

I take a fix on the taillight in front of me and hang on. Gradually my inadequate eyesight begins to adjust and I can make out water lying on the floor of the tunnel and greasy mud sections have developed. I pick the dry lines where possible and eventually a small dot of light appears in the distance. 2.5 kilometers takes an eternity but gradually the dot grows larger and larger. At last I plunge out into the intense daylight and the ordeal is over.

### **Wednesday :**

Another 40 kilometers on the old 'National Highway 1A' and the ongoing battle with Tata trucks, buses, et-al is over for a time at least. We turn off onto a country road. The air is clear again, the valleys fertile and the sunshine warm on my back. Did I mention the road? The next 100 kilometers is like a moto-cross course gone horribly wrong. But I don't mind. We're in the countryside again and loving it.

Our destination today is McLeod Ganj, a little township high on a mountain ridge. Not only does this place have a very strange western/eastern name but it is also the home of one Mr D Lama, head of the Buddhism bunch and deposed leader of the Tibetan people. Most people think he lives in

Dharamsala but he doesn't 'cos he's just 500 meters down the road from our hotel. I guess saying you are from Dharamsala sounds a little more "street cred" than saying you're from McLeod Ganj. Anyway, he's got the best view in India from his bedroom window; and so have I, for one day.

### **Friday :**

Only a few days left in India, so we are starting to really put some miles behind us. This morning is a 6am breakfast and on the road at 6:30am. We have to cover 280 kilometers, our longest distance yet in a single day. I know 280 kilometers doesn't seem like very far, but you should try doing it in India. No-one in our group has had a serious 'get-off' from the bikes yet, so I'm really hoping we can make it in to Delhi with our record intact.

Our journey southeast covers yet more magnificent countryside. Mountains everywhere, rich green tropical foliage, red-brown fertile soil, magnificent crops. And I thought India was a land of poor soil and poverty. With Dharamsala disappearing in our wake we travel on minor country roads which means road signs in Hindi only. This makes navigation very difficult but somehow we all manage to arrive at the lunch stop. This is one of India's great truck-stop pubs in an amazing location clinging to the side of a ravine overlooking a cascading river. The proprietor, like all great pub owners, is a unique character called Mr Nek Ram.

We now cut across some 50 kilometers of back-roads and finally join up with the Chandigarh/Shimla road where we started this incredible journey some 2 weeks and 5 days ago. I quickly carve-up the usual Indian traffic jam and arrive at our destination for the evening. Our Trail Boss has done it again. After a day of appalling roads, he rewards us with the stunning hotel of the trip.

It is in two sections. In the foothills of Parwanoo is their reception, function rooms and swimming pool! The only we have encountered so far. A single cable car then takes us across a huge ravine of a valley and slowly up to a height of some 2,000 feet to a single pinnacle where the accommodation is located. As I look back along the quivering lines of steel cable suspending me above instant death, I try not to think that this equipment is maintained by Indian mechanics.

This evening we eat in a glass walled restaurant area with the lights of Chandigarh shimmering some 2,000 feet below and 15 kilometers away.

We deserve it!

### **Saturday :**

Here it is at last. Our final day on the 'Royal Enfields'. There is no cable car 'till 9am. So we take a casual breakfast for once. The journey back down the strands of steel is a spectacular start to the morning, but we have another big day ahead with 280 kilometers to Delhi. With Chandigarh and many other towns on the highway heading south I am especially aware of complacency. I didn't come to India to ride 2,900 kilometers and then be taken out on the last day by a feral push-bike rider. We are also concerned for our sole lady rider. She has single-handedly ridden everything the Himalaya could throw at her with the exception of a small section on the Kardung La. Indian traffic is not her forte so a bloke from Sydney and I sandwich her bike between us and head for Delhi at 80 k.p.h.

With 25 kilometers to go we re-group and play follow the leader for the final Saturday afternoon traffic chaos to our hotel. An hour later we arrive at 'Hotel Broadway' and it is all over. We shake each other's hand vigorously, and slap each other on the back. We have shared a very special encounter with the Himalaya.

Les Leahy

**19 September, 1999**  
**WONTHAGGI STATE COAL MINE**

**Riders:**

Geoff Jones	ZZR 600 (Leader)	Mick Hanlon	YZF 600
Ron and Daniel Johnston	CB 750	Ian Payne	RF 900
Ray Walker	GSXR 750F	Rob Maticciani	VFR 750 (Rear)

Sunday morning: it had been raining and I was undecided whether or not to go. Will I or won't I? It was decision time. I bolted out the door at 9:45am; 30 minutes to get to Hallam. I was pushing my luck. It was 10:15am when I rode in to Hallam, fueled up and put my wet weather gear on. Weather wise it didn't look too good on the horizon.

Hallam. Headed off along the Princes Highway to Pakenham and down some of our favorite roads. Passed a policeman on a motorbike at Nar-Nar-Goon, C.F.A. Was stopped at Tynong for a license and rego check. We talked for 1/2 hour. Ian knew somebody the policeman knew as well. He spoke about the new 250kw Commodore with six speed gearbox and told us he had it up to 240 kph in fourth gear on the road. We were going on. After our little talk we headed off to Drouin for morning tea.

We left Drouin through Loch. Just before we got to Loch I saw a sign amongst the trees which said "Koo-Wee-Rup Strzelecki Railway". It was one of six narrow gauge railways in Victoria; same as Puffing Billy. Just before Poowong it rained. We stopped at Poowong and discussed whether we should carry onto Wonthaggi. After much thought it was then decided that we should carry on. At Wonthaggi Ray and Geoff got fuel for their bikes. It wasn't long after, we headed off to the Coal Mine. Mick was already there when we arrived. I thought he had left the ride but we went down the main road instead.

We went inside and had something to drink and eat. As it turned out, Ian was related to the man behind the counter. Before we went on the mine tour we watched a video on the history of the mine. We went through the museum as well. It was well worth it to see interesting things at the museum.

After our visit to the museum we had to get our hard hats and be briefed before we went down the mine. It was supposed to be a 40 minute tour but we were down the mine for 2 hours, wandering through a myriad of tunnels. It was interesting to see some of the conditions the miners had to work in: you wouldn't want to be claustrophobic. Some miners even had to work in water. Horses were used to tow the coal wagon. On the way in, we stopped at an air vent shaft, which was 60 metres below and 200 metres from the entrance. Mining here is still in operation today and is done as it was in the early 1900's. When the mine tour finished we were brought out on the cable trolleys.

After the tour we went and had lunch at Wonthaggi. I think everybody was hanging out for something to eat and drink. After lunch we headed back the same way we came. It was a good day, weather wise, rained twice but overall it wasn't too bad. For those who didn't go, you missed out on some local history and I recommend, if you are down that way, it is worth while to pay a visit. There were no incidents.

**Ron Johnston (Honda CB 750)**