

All British Motorcycle Rally Tasmania March 2020 (by Peter Kime & Phil Pilgrim)

The Tassie tour is organized by the British Motorcycle Club of Tasmania. This is the fifth time it has been run and it is going to be held every 2 years from now on.

As it happened 2 vacancies came up Phil Pilgrim contacted me and asked if I would be interested in going. I jumped at the chance as I think Tassie is one of the best places in Australia to ride a motorbike. I have driven around it in all manner of vehicles from a 1972 Renault 16 TL, 1935 Indian Chief, numerous white Corolla rental cars and now a chance on my 1961 Triumph 650 Bonneville. I have had the Bonneville for over 35 years and have left it in the same condition it was in after it was stored under cover back in 1965. Phil gave me a hand making sure it was up to a 1500km ride. We fitted new carburetors to it, an electronic ignition (the magneto was starting to play up.), new drive and primary chains as well as new clutch plates. Once tuned and after numerous test runs it was running as smooth as silk and unlike most Triumphs it did not leak a drop of oil. Phil was taking his Vincati. The Tour was going to start on the 10th of March and finish on the 19th of March. 10 days of riding clockwise around Tassie from the East Coast to the West Coast. 4 other members of the IIRA were also going. Noel Thornby on an A10 borrowed from Phil White, Phil White on an A10 Gold Star, John Fontenalla on his BSA Gold Star and George Fitzpatrick on his BSA M21.

We arrived in Tassie on the 7th March, 3 days before the Rally Registration date. Phil spends a lot of his Xmas holidays in his mates' house in Devonport and planned to drop into see one of his customers just out of Devonport as well as to show me his favorite shop in Devonport. Our first stop once we unloaded the bikes and sorted everything out was a shop called NUBCO, they are a Tool shop and Ships Chandlers. NUBCO is like a tool store on steroids and we spent a couple of hours in there leaving dribble marks on most of the tools they had there. We both left with some tools that we just had to have.

DAY 1

On Tuesday the 10th we made a short run up to Ulverstone to register for the rally. The bikes congregating at the registration center were a good mix of years through British Bike history from a 1926 Norton to 1970's Triumphs. There was a good representation of Vincent's, Brough Superiors, BSAs & Triumphs. A lot were new & old restorations as well as a few that looked like they had just been dragged out of a shed and still had the original paint on them supplemented by a lovely shade of rust. While the majority of bikes where British there were a couple of Harleys (What do Kelpies and Harleys have in common – They both like to ride in the back of trucks.) and a few BMWs (and that doesn't stand for British Motorcycle Works). Thank goodness all the riders were not too precious and welcomed other bikes that were not British.

DAY 2 St Helens

On the 11th we were off on the rally, riding to St Helens. Phil and I decided to keep ahead of the main group and left Devonport at 10:00am. It was good to get the bikes on the road and once out of Devonport we began to enjoy the roads that Tassie is renowned for. Narrow roads, reasonable condition and not a car in site. We took the long way to St Helens going up through Exeter, Derby and into St Helens. Morning tea stop was The Bert Munroe Café in Exeter. The café is run by a local Indian motor bike fanatic and has lots of Indian memorabilia around the café. The proprietor is also a car nut and ready to sit down and have a chat. We caught up with the group for lunch at Scottsdale. All gathered at a Bakery for a pie & sauce and a vanilla slice. In St Helens, Phil and I were staying in a lovely motel called Homelea Cottages about ½ a km from the Caravan Park.

DAY 3 – Hobart

Again we took off before the others and proceeded along the Tasman Highway to Falmouth. This is a magnificent scenic coastal drive, the road running alongside the foreshore for the 1st 100km. Just after Falmouth we did a diversion to enjoy the challenge and excitement of more of Tassie's mountainous climbs / descents and hair pin bends to St Marys Township. This is a must stop for any Car or Motorcycle Nut, just out of St Marys in an old railway siding is St Marys Railway Station The name out the front proudly announces it as "St Marys Cranks and Tinkerers (Museum of Interesting Things.) If you are into anything he has it, including the partial restoration of a 40s Dodge that he found in a paddock. If you stay there long enough someone will come up in an old car to pop in to have a chat with Ian. Ian is also a keen modeler and has a huge range of plastic cars and planes he has built. He also builds old sailing ships out of wood and has a lot under construction. We spent a couple of hours talking Phil and I were hungry and headed up the twisting road to Elephant pass and Elephant Pancake House. The Pancakes they make there are superb with such a great range your do not know where to start.

We then took off towards Hobart, again enjoying the scenic roads along the way. As the next day was raining we decided to catch the bus into Hobart, see the Salamanca Market and go down to the docks for a 1st class fish meal.

DAY 6 Hobart to Tarraleah

Sunday came out bright and clear skies. When we were getting the bikes ready we noticed that one side of the motel appeared deserted. The owner came over to tell us that the Government had asked him to put up people who had come off the cruise ships in the harbor. He had 6 people already there that were in self-quarantine. We thought it was a good time to get out of there, hoping the exhaust fumes from our bikes would be enough to kill any virus that wanted to follow us.

We caught up with the main group at Bushy Park which is just past Norfolk. The rally organizers were putting on a BBQ lunch and it was a great sight to see over 100 motorbikes pull into the oval where the BBQ was being held.

The main group was staying at Tarraleah Village and some left overs were staying at the Bronte Park Cottages. This is when we realized that the hoarder mentality had started to hit Tassie; the local general store was offering a cup of coffee for \$7:50 with a free roll of toilet paper.

DAY 7 Tarraleah to Strahan main group, Phil & I to Queenstown.

Phil and I were not keen on Strahan and headed for Queenstown instead.

Just outside of Bronte Park on the Lyell Highway at Derwent Bridge is a place called the Wall. It was recommended as being well worth a look so Phil and I turned in. There were already about 20 bikes there from the main group and it was a good time to catch up and compare notes. The Wall consists of 100 hand sculptured timber panels, each 1m wide by 3 m high. The scale of the work hand carving this is staggering. The final finish of the sculptures is like leather. Definitely was worth the visit.

The next time we caught up with the group was Nelson Falls just before Queenstown. Very pretty spot to have a quick toilet stop and a 10 minute walk to the Falls. A lot of people on BMW Adventure bikes, a group of about 20 on Victory Motorcycles, some Harleys, a group of AC Cobras thundering past and to top it off a small group of Minis trailing behind the Cobras. It is amazing how many groups of cars and motorbikes pick Tassie as a touring destination.

DAY 8 Strahan Rest Day for main group. Phil & I headed for Stanley.

Queenstown to Hellyer Gorge is where the roads get really winding and become a test for an old bike. Not sure if the sign is still there but it used to say – 100 bends ahead as you leave Queenstown. We didn't count them but is sure felt more than that! The road is in good condition but I did notice coming into some corners the camber on Tassie roads seems a lot flatter than Victorian roads, in some cases making the corner a bit more difficult to get around. There are a lot of corners stating 35km only and you definitely have to take notice of them, as you go around they just seem to get tighter and tighter, definitely 2nd gear corners. As we were getting out of the twisty bits we came across a corner that had a bit of gravel right on the start of the bend. Phil cut in close to the center line and got through OK. I took the corner a bit high and hit the gravel. Lucky I had already scrubbed of a bit of speed and was slowing down. The back wheel stepped out in the gravel and put the bike into a slide, as I got the bike upright again it was too late to avoid the Armco railing and it was a slow motion bump into the railing. Lucky for the bike I was caught between the railing and the bike. When we picked up the bike all it had was a minor damage to the left hand side – a bent footrest and mirror stem slight bend. I on the other hand had a very sore left ankle, rib cage and left arm, no damage to my riding gear which proves the point that wearing the right gear is well worth it.

We then proceeded onto Stanley, stopping just before the turn off to Stanley for fuel. It was at this stage I found it a bit difficult to walk on my left foot. I also found it a bit difficult to support the bike on my left foot while I kicked it over with my right foot. One thing you have to watch out on these roads are log trucks, there is nothing worse than looking in your rear vision mirror and you can quite clearly see the name of the truck on the radiator and that is all that you can see! We were sitting on the speed limit and it was a relief when we got to a hill and you could then see the whole truck and trailer in the mirrors.

That night we went to Hurseys Seafood Restaurant and had the best feed of fish we have ever had, even had a Crayfish entrée that was really delightful. By know my ankle was giving a bit of bother and it was a slow hobble back to the cottage. We walked / hobbled into Stanley, stopped at a Chemist for an elastic bandage for my foot as well as some Panadol. We spent the morning visiting the museums and sights and took one look at the path going up to the Nut and realized it wasn't for us (especially me). We then went to the Stanley Bakery to have the best Scallop pies in Tassie.

DAY 10 Devonport

The Rally was finishing tonight and was having a final dinner at the Ulverstone Rowing Club. Phil and I both thought that in light of all the problems now going around with Covid-19 we would probably be better not going due to the number of people that would be at the dinner. We found that since our 1st day in Devonport that supplies were now getting in short supply and they too had a run on toilet paper. We were notified that the 20th would be the last voyage out for the Spirit of Tasmania and we were happy that we had tickets for that voyage. We proceeded onto the ship and went straight to our room and decided to isolate ourselves and stay there until the boat docked. Phil was regretting not getting some chocolate bars before we went into isolation but I was happy as I still had a bottle of wine to finish off and we had 2 rolls of toilet paper in the bathroom.

The trip was excellent, and even though we did not stay or meet the rest of the group on a frequent basis we both enjoyed each other's company and just loved the ride. Would do it again in a heartbeat, especially on the Triumph, it just loved the roads and ran as smooth as silk except for the minor altercation with the Armco railing.

Got home Sat morning, unloaded the Triumph faced the consequences from Pat who said if it was a motorcycle crash she was going to take my license off me. Lucky it did not come to that.

On the Monday I went to the Dr about my ankle, he sent me for an X-Ray and they sent me straight back to the Dr who said I had a broken Fibula. I was then fitted for one of those horrible moon boots and have been hobbling around since. No driving (HR & Rodeo are both manuals and no bike riding), lucky I have plenty to do in the garage.



Austin 8 30HP, 62mph vs Bonneville 34 HP, 100mph



What a handsome pair, the Vincati and Triumph T120



Congregation at Bushy Park for Lunch time BBQ, over 100 bikes..



St Mary's Cranks and Tinkerers Museum. Ian is a delightful bloke to talk to. Well worth going off the main highway to have a look.



ful Scenery, lots of things to see and great roads.