

## RAIN IN THE FACE RALLY

By: Phillip White

The 2021 Mid-July “Rain In the Face” Rally has come and gone and it went very well. It almost goes without saying that a rally held in the dead of winter is never going to draw a large number of attendees. Only a dozen club members participated but what we lacked in numbers we made up for in Quality. For the next three days we had perfect blue skies and, as little we knew then, this was to be the last week end where we would be allowed out to play. Carpe Diem!

We based out of a large red brick motel near the Main Street of Echuca. This is a port city on the Murray with a long history. Therefore it is touristy and ergo it boasts a goodly number of pubs, bars and restaurants . The Motel was well located but looked a lot like that brick jail in metropolitan Melbourne they built a few years back. To reinforce that similarity, there were lots of Police staying there. They were there as part of the border protection against the Dreaded Covid Bug.

Most of the attendees drove up on the Wednesday and a noticeable number of them brought more than one bike. To arrive early is becoming a fairly common practise, most attendees have control of their time and departing on the Sunday leaves time for family.

On the Thursday it was the coldest day of the Rally with temps down around 2 degrees. A few of us had the rather excellent heated jackets and gloves from “Venture”. All I wore on my torso was a t-shirt, the Venture jacket and a light leather jacket and it was fine. Such a step up from the layers of stuff we all had to wear in times past. We were on the road at the crack of ten thirty and headed for Bridgewater and its famous Bakery. In 2020 the general public voted this establishment as having the best pies and vanilla slices in all of Victoria. We then meandered up the street to a shop that specialises in Classic Nortons - but they were shut. Back on the bikes we went a couple of km’s up the road to a winery where most folk bought a bottle or three of rather good value wine. The return ride was pleasant and apparently uneventful..... wrong, wrong, wrong.

To comprehend what follows it is helpful to understand the layout of the motel. As mentioned it is a large two story complex built in the form of a hollow rectangle. Access is via a fairly long entrance passage way that opens on to the central courtyard. On the right is a concrete apron that would hold around twenty or more cars. After that there is sheltered parking under the building which is bounded by a brick wall at the side boundary, stairs to the right and on the left a 6 metre glass

partition with sliders that forms part of the fencing for the swimming pool. I arrived slightly ahead of the main group so I had a grandstand view of what transpired next.

There was a milling mass of bikes either on the concrete apron or trying to get up the narrow driveway. Noel Thornby was bringing up the rear on his trusty 47 and tried to avoid the miniature traffic jam by jumping the gutter. Now the foot clutch on a Chief is a sturdy and trouble free piece of equipment but....they can bite you. When the bike hit the gutter, Noel put a foot out for balance whereupon the clutch smartly dropped in to full engagement. The resultant lurch and further loss of control caused him to wind open the left hand throttle. Indians are torquy old brutes and the bike took off like a scalded cat. All Noel could do was hang on and try and avoid the milling mass of bikes, riders, parked cars and brick columns and he did a great job. He had the horn blaring and in flat track style, managed to wrench the bike to the left - away from a nasty head on into the looming brick wall. This put him on course towards the glass fence. Ever seen "Stargate" where there is a flash of silver as people go through the portal? I got a rear view of an Indian and rider momentarily silhouetted by 6 metres of spectacularly exploding glass. The front wheel wedged into a buttress with enough force to snap the bottom fork link spindle like a crisp carrot, the front end collapsed and the bike finally stalled. That's What I Call An Entrance! Noel was a little shaken and bruised but otherwise O.K. Definitely Beer O'clock after that! Dinner that evening was at the Star Hotel and perfectly adequate for a pub.

The first stop on Friday's run was the town of Colbinabbin. There is not much there but like many towns in this region the city fathers have opted to paint large murals on a group of silos. I suppose that if people have a reason to stop in the town then they have a reason to spend money in the town. The arvo run took us to Kyabram where we had a brief stop and regroup. Club Member Garry Hog was mounted on his very clean 1976 Triumph Trident. Gary has owned this bike for many trouble free years but in the recent past the bike has been plagued with engine and electrical problems. This time the bike was quietly parked when suddenly vast quantities of thick blue smoke erupted from the headlight. Much frantic fuse pulling saved the day. The culprit turned out to be a shorted out blinker wire so the machine was still rideable. On to Rushworth for our lunch stop and more Silo Art.

After return to base camp, we dined that night at a hotel that shall remain nameless - appalling would be too kind an epithet to describe the food. I had a rack of lamb with ribs so huge that they looked like a prop from "Jurassic Park"! I am sure this particular lamb died of old age. Other folk reported inedible curries

and such like. [I have been advised that the steak was acceptable] Later in the evening a number of us felt the need to party on to recover our equilibrium.

Saturday's run was supposed to start early for an extended run to Kerang where a pub had been booked for lunch. I was not planning to join this particular run as my Vincent was out of action with ignition problems and my Enfield had nipped up briefly the day before. So I thought I would just nurse the bike to Kerang and back with John Fontanella riding shotgun in case the bike crapped out and needed recovery. John and I set out for a leisurely breakfast at the rather excellent cafe right next to the motel. I kept expecting to hear departing bikes but no. When we meandered back to the hotel the group was still 'faffing' about! Here are just a few of the reasons for this tardy departure:

1. Garry Hogg had left his choke on the day before and a plug change was necessary.
2. John Shea's bike suffered a sunken float.
3. Phil Pilgrim could not find the keys to his Vindian. [after a lot of frantic searching of the premises by the group, they were found in the pocket of his previous days riding jacket!]

Although the Enfield had zero compression on one cylinder I thought I would chance it. The bike started and ran ok but very smokey. We made it to Kerang by the direct route and found the lads and laddette in the pub. I didn't eat there but reports were good. The proprietors were very solicitous. I guess things are just so tough on the tourist scene that they wanted to be sure we were happy. Apparently the main group basically crisscrossed the Gun Barrel Highway back to town. My bike was over heating so I set off on my own but my 200 year old GPS steered me wrong. I ended up doing many extra km. I got within 9 km of town when the bike expired. A call to John saw him drive out in my Ute for a rescue. That night we hit the Royal Hotel. This is also a Gin Distillery with yummy finger food. A welcome break from pub grub.

There was mooted to be a Sunday morning run but it did not transpire. No matter, a very good time was had by all.

This entire event was planned and organised by President Piercy and Wonder Woman A.K.A. Sandy Ayres so a very special thanks to them for their efforts. If you missed this Rally, try hard to make the next one. It is said you only regret the things you do not do.

Attendees:

Alistair Piercy 2015 Chief

Sandy Ayers 47 Chief  
Phillip White 47 Vincent and 37 Royal Enfield  
Dave Cattrall 2015 Chief  
John Fontanella 54 BSA Gold Star  
Noel "Cannonball" Thornby 47 Chief and 57 BSA B33  
Gary "FireBall" Hog 76 Triumph Trident  
George Fitzpatrick 44 Chief and 1954 M21 "Sports"  
John Munn 47 Chief  
Phil Pilgrim 47 Vindian Replica  
Heath Pilgrim 68 Trumph Bonneville  
John Shea 47 Chief