

## Short version

### VVC MCC Summer Tour Report February 2017.

19 to 26 Feb 2017

#### Riders:

Lorraine Litster:	Triumph T100 Bonneville	2007
Len Skipper:	Triumph Tiger 800	2015
Ron Jacobs:	BMW R100 Dakar	1993
Clinton Jacobs:	Honda Firestorm	
Victor Mylek:	Honda Dominator (Day one only)	

In November 2016 I attended the annual week long Velocette Rally which was based in the Latrobe Valley. A strange location you might think, a place of coal fired power stations & open cut coal mines. This is all true except to the south & north of this valley lie the most lovely hilly country which we rode extensively during our week there. I decided to recreate these rides, or the best of them for this year's tour. This is how we went.

**Day 1:** Obviously we had to get to the Gippsland & this involved our first day riding the Cooma/Bombala/Cann River route. This is well known to most except for a short detour to the Genoa Falls. Don't try to find this as it is on an unmarked track which was really only for dirt bikes. The falls are lovely & Clinton took a swim. All was going well until lunch at Cann River after which Victor's bike refused to go. After at least an hour & a half of heroic diagnosis we got the bike going & rode on to Marlo. It was nearly 6pm with rain sweeping in when we arrived. The bikes were under cover gladly & a lovely meal with a few beers was our reward. The rooms here are very good by the way.

**Day 2:** The next day dawned dry & cool. Victor decided to retrace the route home has in truth we had only been able to cobble the bike to run. In Orbost we refuelled & got Victor going. (He made it home incidentally). We rode west to Bairnsdale via Bruthen with gathering storm clouds ahead. We turned north on the C601 towards Dargo intending to turn west to Stratford, but were frustrated by gathering heavy showers ahead which we tried to dodge, with some success. From Stratford we took the C105 to Mafra where we toured the car & bike museum, well worth it, & the town is pleasant too. The C105 zig-zags to Traralgon & we barely avoided a drenching on the way.

Here I made my big mistake: we were to cross the Morwell Hills, or is it called the Strzelecki Range? I had elected the route via Churchill but the road turned to dirt in whilst we rode in heavy rain: wrong way. We turned around & returned to the massive Loy Yang power station where the correct route crosses the hills via the lovely Tarra Bulga National Park: not to be missed. (C483 & C484) The descent is narrow & winding & very lovely. Our 2<sup>nd</sup> night was at the Tarra Motel in pretty Yarram: a very good value motel, with the bikes under cover again & ample dinner in the nearby Club.

**Day 3** dawned promising a sunny day after a damp start. We had breakfast at a café in Yarram, though you can also order it at the Motel. There is an interesting old style

bike shop in Yarram but it was not open, but if you are there take a look at it. We rode west on the A440 heading for Wilson's Promontory, but with a short stop at Toora, an overnight stop on a previous tour, where we stayed in the pub. Wilson's Prom' is a massive outcrop sticking out into the ocean. It is very lovely but has only one road in to a place called Tidal River. This place turned out to be a campsite from hell; with so many people there it looked like a shanty town. Ron said that in the 1980s it had been a small basic campsite.

We returned to Fish Creek back on the mainland, which is a pretty village in contrast to Tidal River. We had lunch here in a nice, but a bit twee, cafe. It was hot by now. We continued to Meeniyah then on to Dumbalk on the C455. This is glorious rolling country, which would look like Devon in wetter greener times. The lovely country continued to Mirboo North & Thorpdale now all 80kph limited but we didn't see any 'revenue raisers' on this section. Incidentally in Victoria the speed traps are in plain cars, which the locals readily recognised & flashed a warning to us, nice folk! The Velo fellows took the Strzelecki Track from Thorpdale, (not the Hwy of the same name). This is the nearest thing to an English country lane I have ever found in Australia, narrow & winding all the way to Moe where you suddenly pop out onto a modern Hwy! Here we visited Old Gippsdown, which was close to closing but we took a look anyway: well worth a visit. We then took the C466 north with Erica Pub as our overnight stop, before our next day trip to historic Walhalla. There was great food at the pub & motel rooms to stay.

It turned out that there was no fuel in these hills & the route I had planned via Mt Baw Baw was dirt & we had insufficient fuel anyway. The next morning we rode the 22 Km to lovely historic Walhalla, once a busy gold mining town, but is now a tourist town. They pulled 30 ton of gold from the mountain in the late 19<sup>th</sup> & early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. There is a restored narrow gauge railway, which used to run to Moe. We rode on it before lunch & then took a trip down the goldmine, which once went 900m down, below sea level, but now is mostly flooded except for the main drift. After leaving we were forced to return to Moe for fuel, which was annoying, before riding north again on the C465 via Willow Grove to Noojee. This is another glorious road climbing through grey gum forest. The pub in Noojee looks good but we didn't stop there. There is an attraction here a massive wooden railway viaduct. The railway is long gone, but the viaduct is well maintained, don't miss it.

The C425 road runs west through lovely country until we reached Yarra Jn. where we hit the outskirts of Melbourne suburbia, which was a shock after many miles of open road. We soon arrived at Healesville & our accommodation at the Sanctuary Motel. This was a great place to stay & only a few hundred yards from the entrance to the Wildlife Sanctuary. We had dinner here in their good restaurant.

**Day 4:** We decided to change our route plan this morning now to cross the Yarra Range to Marysville. This was again mountainous & forested, & lovely riding (B380). Marysville had been very badly damaged several years ago by a ferocious bushfire: I cannot remember the exact year. There were serious fatalities. However the town now sits restored in its pretty valley, with only the acres of dead trees on the surrounding hills to tell the tale. This town is worth a visit or even a stay.

Riding north, we were only on the Maroondah Hwy for a few miles before we turned off for Eildon for our lunch stop. I expected a resort rather like a Jindabyne but instead it seemed more like Khancoban, a company town. After lunch we saw the dam, impressive & a bit like Wyangala's in design. Then we rode on the road to Mansfield via Jamieson. This ~60Km looks innocuous on the map but in reality it consisted of relentless twists and bends. It was exhausting. The run thence to Mansfield was 'small potatoes' in comparison. I was suffering from the heat by then & did not feel good.

Yet again we climbed into ranges & crossed to Whitfield in the King Valley. I used to think of this road as demanding, but after earlier routes on the tour it seemed a piece of cake. The Whitfield to Myrtleford road, the logical route to our destination remains stubbornly dirt, probably 20Km plus of it. This leaves no alternative except to ride almost to Wangaratta (that is unless you like which I don't!). We were all irked by this especially as time was getting on and we had ridden a hard day. Ron wanted to ride south to Myrtleford on the Snow Road but Len & I had other ideas & Len's GPS was pointing a different way. Len & I arrived in Yackandandah well ahead of Ron & Clinton, but there was only small ill will!

The Yackandandah Motor Inn is small but high quality. There seemed to be only motorcyclists there, the others all heading for Philip Island where 'Superbikes' were on. We spent a lovely balmy evening in the bottom pub.

**Day 6:** was a long ride day & we set off quite early. We decided to cross the Granya Gap on the upper Murray & then follow the northern route via Walwa. This is more scenic than the Corryong road following another arm of the Hume Reservoir eastward. We stopped for refreshments in Walwa, which has a lovely general store cum café. This route bypassed Corryong so we ended at Khancoban for fuel & lunch. Clinton expressed an interest to ride to Cooma via the alpine way rather than the planned route via Cabramurra. Google suggested that there was only a few Km difference in the two routes & little time difference. This surprised me, but as a result I agreed to the Alpine Way. Ron wanted to ride the Boobyan Road from Adaminaby so he left us at Khancoban. The Alpine way is definitely more scenic, at least until you arrive in Jindabyne when it gets rather dull. We only stopped at the Scammell lookout & at Leather Barrel Creek on the way to Cooma, where we stopped at Polo Flat, before the ultra boring Monaro Hwy back home.

It had been a great trip of 2100 Km, slightly longer than the planned 1850 Km, due to our several changes of plan. Everyone agreed that it had been a grand tour & Ron, who has been a Tour regular, even declared that it was the best tour ever. This year I had kept the daily mileage down to approx 350Km & planned the route to only ride the best roads. Thank you to the Velocette Owners Club who did all the hard work in planning the Gippsland section, I would not have known about many of these roads otherwise.

**Lorraine Litster**

**Sunday, 5 March 2017**