

Banjo Wrote It!

*This is a tale, of adventure and more, as a group of bikers went to Longreach on tour.
They travelled this land with its grandeur, and might, companions, and happy about that, you'd be right.
Every day was a new dawn, with skies blue and clear, but they couldn't understand, dead roo's everywhere.*

*They saw bulls, and emu's, and two pigs on the road, it's a little more daunting, than a flattened cane toad.
Then as we rode out, to the bush and back, we saw the menace full speed on the track.
It's awesome, and noisy, and runs through the night, with 72 wheels, and bull bar with light.
Some with three trailers, and others with more, huge power and presence and the foot to the floor.*

*They run through the night, and the next day it's all clear, as we rode on the bikes, dead roo's everywhere.
And as the miles unfold, and more road up ahead, it's a sad sight to see, these animals all dead.
But that's the way of this country seen by the eagle up high, he sees it all with his ever eagle eye. And as he
sores on the wing it's all very clear, it's another new day with dead roo's everywhere.*

*So as we rode along with our rambling sound, the bikes all as one roaring over the ground.
The country unfolded with its scenic fresh air, but every few meters dead roo's everywhere.
So there is my tale, that Banjo didn't do, I just thought I'd say that to fool with you.
So now you know and I'll make it clear...it was Sidecar Phil and dead roo's everywhere.*

*So next time you drive, and into the night, watch out for the road train the awesome sight.
And when you see it coming move over and clear, cos I'm telling ya cobber, there'll be dead roo's
everywhere.*

Ride Diary from 'Sidecar Phil': (The Long Run to Longreach) With added comments by Rod

Well Readers, and Riders.

The idea was born from Thursday club runs, and just going longer. Something bigger...it seemed to take forever to come about ...and now here we are to tell you all about our run...TO LONGREACH...we did it ...it's done, and now we plan the next one!



We ended up with four bikers and a blonde. Greg on his BMW,.Rodders on his yammy, all new and repaired from his shunt up the rear axle, Sidecar Phil, on his freshly serviced Harley outfit with wife Blondie, and Ron on his Honda, and we all arranged to meet at Yatala pies for a lazy late start after the big weekend, and work for Phil and Blondie.

On arrival all the boys were waiting and all the bikes looked the part loaded to the hilt with stuff ya need when ya go touring and camping. The plan was to camp and let it all happen. If it rained we would deal with each day as it all fell into place. As it turned out, every day was perfect, no wet, and a new and exciting experience for the first timers. Rodders was the Road Capt, and with Greg and his GPS, the boys conferred on time, distance travel, and did a grand job over seeing the distance and range thing, re fuel and coffee stops etc. We went via Esk, Nanango, and headed toward Kingaroy.

The Harley with a full load, and side car had not done this before, so its range and fuel consumption was a learning experience, and depending on the country, proved to have a reliable range of around 170ks. So Sidecar Phil needed fuel at just about every petrol station in Queensland, BUT!! Readers, it wasn't that bad, and we never spent more than \$47.00 per day.

The other bikes used exactly half so considering the two people combo, it was about normal. After an enjoyable first days ride, and everyone excited about it and enjoying the camaraderie, we arrived late afternoon, and settled into building our tents. Ron had his up first, and the camp ground at Gayndah, proved very nice, and "Ron have a chat Hewitt," wasted no time in chatting about the camp, and meeting all the guests .The boys had showers, the billy was on, hot tea and coffee, and our first night sleeping in our tents. \$14.00 per tent. That camp had a dining room so we all did our own thing. Meals were a sort of, who wants what? How do you want to do it, sort of thing. Nice friendly camp manager, and the bikes attracted allot of attention wherever we were.

Rod's Comment: First stop at Esk had us all concerned when it looked like Phil's sidecar was leaking automatic fluid. It turned out to be much worse; it was red wine! After lunch we were hit by several whirlwinds. One invisible knocked me one way then the other. Greg was trying to set his cruise control and was really shaken; Ron was asleep and was rudely awakened.

DAY 2...

The next morning we woke to the usual chorus of Good morning Rod, Greg how did you all sleep, toilet run, and someone put the billy on. We always had lots a hot tea's and coffee happening. Then our assorted different breakfasts, and BREAK CAMP. It takes about the same time to break camp as it does to set up, and each day we got better and more organized. It becomes routine, and fun. I had a little broom which was great to brush off grass etc. and I also had the only hammer. IE tent pegs. Well Rodders started off with his own, but we think he donated it to the malty hammer collection of the camp manager, who told us he had lots of hammers.

On departing first camp, Ron's bike wouldn't start. 1st problem! Flat battery, so the boys push started him, and we were off. The first fuel stop was at Monto, and then on to Biloela. Rodders, has arranged a meet with a lovely bunch of fellow bikers from the Twin Valley Motorcycle Club, and after sorting out a new battery for Ron's Honda, we all went with the lads from our welcoming committee, and did lunch together at their local RSL...great guys: Frank, Marty, Keith, Jimmy and Gary. They actually waited for us at the Mobil garage where we all gassed up, and then they took us to lunch. Gift vouchers as well...a nice time had by all, and new companions... we will see again.

After lunch we hit the road, and all enjoyed the changing country side, and riding was great. The Harley was running well and well into the afternoon, I was pushing it a bit up a hill, and the traditional sound a Harley makes changed drastically. I thought...OH SHIT...done the donk...it went BLATT BLAST blatt burgle waggles spit COUGH, Blatt. Now readers unbeknown to me, Rodders, and Greg are ducking and diving behind me at 110ks, as my left pipe decided to spit out its guts, and dump its baffles all over the road.

Round about now we are on route, and following the signs to Rockhampton. I pulled over, the boys all stopped, and we worked out what had happened. I still had power so we were good to go, BUT JESUS, was the Harley loud. That will get fixed asap...but not here on the side of the road. I needed a work shop.

Late that afternoon, and all a bit weary, and sick of the noise Wally (Phil's Harley) was making, we all pulled up at a free council camp ground at a place called Duaringa...Just before Blackwater, on the way to Rockhampton. Nice park and "Have a chat Ron" was first set up, and doing his meet and greet. Rodders was usually first in the shower, but these had had the taps damaged so Rodders fixed them, and all the camp stayers were grateful. It's a wonder what a man can do with a pair of pliers, and that night our neighbours with a wonderful fire invited us all over, and drinks and sing songs and a guitar, and late into the night. I can't remember much more. OH SO SICK next morning! Everywhere we went we made friends and each night was a great occasion and fun. Breaking camp next morning a bit slow for me and the blonde...

Rod's Comment: It was great to catch with some of the guys from the Twin Valley Motorcycle Club. They have a long ride every two years which we should look at joining. I have been travelling a bit lighter today as I left by folding chair in the rubbish bin at Gayndah. Will now be staying well back from Wally. It shoots things at you.

DAY ...3

Leaving the park, and saying goodbye to our new found friends was timely, and the wind in our face as we headed off was refreshing after the night before. Ron, Rod, and Greg went to sleep early, and were painfully cheerful at breakfast. They rode well ahead of us to avoid the noise Wally was blowing from his baffle less pipe, and we roared on to Emerald for our first fuel and tea stop. We all fancied Red Rooster for lunch, and so that was good and by now the Blonde and I had recovered, and were back to our happy selves. Rod and Greg were always happy as was Ron.

We all socialized but found enjoyment meeting other travellers, and Ron was always off somewhere chatting. Hence the name "Have a chat Ron."

By now we had a nice routine thing happening, and all enjoyed the riding. Lots of road work stops so we switched off and walked and talked, and stretched etc. By 2.10 that after noon we stopped for our second fuel up and this was my first long leg and arrived on fumes. The Harley took 18.56 litres...it has a 19 litre tank. I was how ever carrying a 4 litre back up. That fuel and tea stop was at a lil place called Alpha. Under a tree and all drinking tea a spunky lil chicky babe approached Greg, and asked if he was from these parts. Rodders moved in and rescued Greg so he could finish his tea in piece, and the young lady finished her smoke and said bye. Just goes to show ya readers, when you ride a bike, they are chick magnets. Wait till I tell ya about the woman that told Ron she was alone; about day 5...you will have to wait!!

4. pm was usually about camp site time, and day three found us all at Barcaldine. The Homestead Van Park and a real swanky place with great showers, and a camp kitchen. This was the beginning of the CAMP KITCHEN experience. A lovely communal cook and meet place, and some nice chats and talks with fellow travellers. And the nights were getting cold now, and extra woollies needed. The routine was always the same...Tents up, blow the beds up, with the lil pumps running from the bikes, andsomeone boil the billy,

then we made plans for what we would do about food. Every night was a treat, and the best part of the day, plus the sleeping in the tents thing ...GREAT GREAT GREAT !!! Apart from the noise from the Harley, all the bikes are running well, and covered in dead bugs.

Rod's Comment: Barcaldine was a hot little town as I discovered during my compulsory morning walk. The town used to have 13 pubs. Only 5 are still in operation today. Every building in town had its history on a sign outside. It seems every original building had been burnt down several times through its history. The morning started with rosters crowing at 3.30am. At 4.30 the only thing louder than the rosters was Greg's voice yelling "will someone shoot those bloody rosters".

DAY...4

Day four began much as the others. Someone would cough, sneeze, make a comment; "JESUS, its cold", and Rodders was usually the first up. 'OH C'mon, I have just walked around the town, had my cereal, OH, and the waters hot'. About then, the zips would open, heads would poke out of tents, and the boys staggered out for coffee. The Blonde always had hers in bed. We all woke early as we slept early most nights, and the routine soon settles and it almost becomes a natural way to live, and all the ornaments and furniture and junk back at our homes is the furthest most thing from your mind.

Day four had worked out differently as there was no set plan, so by 8.55 we were loaded and fuelled up, and only a short enjoyable 90 k run from Barcaldine to our destination, Longreach. On this stretch Sidecar Phil lead the way with the other bikes well back to stay clear of my roaring cackling pipes, and as agreed, the first "Welcome to Longreach" sign appeared so we stopped next to it ,and did our "here we are at Longreach picture."

BY 11.15, we were in the Discovery caravan park, settling in, and this one was quite classy with great camp kitchen, and restaurant. Ron did his usual get to know the other campers, and Rodders and Greg were outta there and straight over to the Qantas display.You can't miss it; you gotta drive right past it to get to the Town. Road trains are an awesome spectacle, and they are all over the place once you get out back.

Blondie and I headed off to town with Greg later that day, and I found a very helpful country engineering workshop, who let me drive the Harley into their shop, they gave me a truck air cleaner from a big Merc, and let me use all their stuff to build a new exhaust baffle. 45 min's later a hand shake, and great full thanks, and \$20.00 to shout the boys a drink, we rode Wally home, with a much more pleasant rumbling exhaust, and all was well.

That night we all ate together in the camp Restaurant, nice menu choice, and about \$25.00 each. Had a few drinks talked with some colourful characters, and off to bedBRRRR it's cold in Longreach at night.

Rod's Comment: We made it!

DAY ...5

Tommy tourist day...we all went off and did the Qantas thing, and the Stockman's Hall of Fame. The outdoor show was great with a really funny bugger, and his horses and animals and he did a great show featuring his horses a camel, and dogs, and then bought in a team of Bullocks and did the haul and load a log onto the Dray, or bullock wagon .Great day and all of us running into each other as we passed taking in all the sights at our own pace. Dinner that night was snags and bread rolls in the camp kitchen, reflecting on the great day we all had. WE WERE IN LONGREACH READERS. Kangaroo's hopped about right outside our tent. We named one of them Rodders.

Rod's Comment: The other roo was Ben!

DAY...6

Day 6 was a lazy one with no real plan, and Rod had a few things he wanted us to see so we did our usual early morning rise, coffee, and the boys saw firsthand, that which has been a rumour for some time ...First thing in the morning; I really am a picture of loveliness. By 9.30 that morning we were loaded, fuelled and on our way and stopped off at a lil town called Ilfracombe. These little towns have interesting road side museums, and we were all interested in the displays of old tractors pumps etc. Any stop usually meant a road side cuppa as we all had hot water on board, so tea anyone?

Blackall was the next stop at 12.45, lunch in the local called the Barcoo Hotel, all with loads' of history, and then we did see the actual "Black Stump", an artesian well that pumps hot water out of the earth, and ended up at the famous old historical Wool Scour. \$15.00 each for the tour. You could feel the atmosphere in the place and see part of Australia's wool industry and take note of how the Government sold out its own farmers. Blackall would be a thriving hub of industry and employ hundreds, and it's all going to ruin if not for a few historical believers who keep it going for tourism.

We made camp that afternoon at the Blackall caravan park sort of a lazy day and not too many ks were clocked up. Another great night with billy tea and damper, and dinner deal \$18.00 each with roast beef. Some camps have entertainment, and this one did. Nice atmosphere with a well known Aussie singer songwriter resident in the park "Graham Roger", was excellent. We all had a ball, and the bikes attracted attention from travellers, and they called us the young fellas. Dinner that night with the music and back chat was fun. And a great country singer who did a wonderful show with great songs and many of his were recorded by Slim Dusty. His name was Graham Roger...very talented and enjoyable singer.

Rod's Comment: The damper with golden syrup was great; just ask Greg. The last count was 6 maybe 7 slices!

DAY...7

We loaded up and were on our way from Blackall at 8.45. Day seven was a big day of riding and all the bikes running sweet. Lots a dead roo's and the occasional high speed spurt to get past a road train...they flip and wallow, on some rough roads, and you need to pick a safe moment. The day went on with fuel stops being the high light other than the passing scenery, and we pulled into Mitchell for a lunch stop. Mitchell was closed so we decided to keep going, and rounded up the day at Roma, and the local caravan park called Romavilla Holiday Park.

We had the camp all set up in record time. By now we were getting good at it, and then it was Rodders big day. HIS BIRTHDAY!! That night we set up in the camp kitchen which for our first time was right next to our tent sight. So it was great, and Rodders, and Greg decided to get a big feed of Chicken and chips which was also conveniently located in a shop next door, and with a drink or three, and Rodders with his birthday Rum, we had our lil birthday do for Rod.

That night it was cool but no rain, and the following morning all up early lots of hot tea, and break camp for the last time. The tour was so much fun but time went by so quickly, and we were all amazed at how quick it was nearly all done.

Rod's Comment: Several drivers had warned us about the condition of the roads which we through were pretty good. However during this leg we came across a 3-hump woopydoo. The first hump was smooth; the third hump was smooth; the bloody second hump lifted me off my seat, sent Wally into the air and we almost lost Crista (Phil's lovely wife); Ron was asleep and was rudely awakened.

DAY... 8 - HOME WARD BOUND.

The last day started the same way and we were packed and ready in record time. Rodders wanted to visit a winery which as it happened was also next door. That park had it all. So by 8.15, we were in the winery with all the loaded bikes parked outside. A few fuel stops, and nonstop running, and we were going through Chinchilla. Next stop was Dalby for lunch, and some more clothes...it got cool in parts of the tour. We took our time with lunch, and then made a surprise visit to Ron's mate Bob White. What a house, and the whole, property is a scale model railway. What a pleasure and Bob was a wonderful host, and gave us all the grand tour. He has a loco on the bench nearly ready to paint. A years work plus and everything to scale.

The home stead is a copy of a government building, and all around the property were scale model railway fixtures with real signals and so much to see. After taking in all that, we mounted up, and headed off and through Toowoomba, and riding as we had from the beginning Greg, Ron, Rod, and me with Blondie, found ourselves on the Warrego Hwy east of Gatton, one more fuel and coffee stop, and that point we all said good bye. The tour was now behind us. We got on our trusted Bikes that but for a few minor glitch's were perfect, and all safe and reliable. We hit the toll road, and home. The long road to LONGREACH TOUR DONE... What a pleasure it was ...Bring on the next trip...

Over n out ..Sidecar Phil.

Rod's Comment: Got wine for Sharol at Romavilla Winery. (Mine did not leak). Great Weather! Great Trip! Great Country! Great Company! Everything was bloody great!