

## POSTIE BIKE CHALLENGE 2006



And a challenge it was!! We headed from Brisbane, via Jandowae, Nindigully pub, Charleville, Windorah, Birdsville, Bedourie, Boulia, Tobermorey Station and Gemtree, all the way to Alice Springs on ex Australia post Honda CT 110's. Of the 52 starters, aged 28 to 60+, ten were women.

Day one, on arrival in Brisbane, we were each presented with our "dream machine" complete with a milk crate, 5 litre jerry can, lunch box and water bottle etc. The little luxuries that I'd brought with me were soon fixed to my bike. Most of the women were eyeing off my lambs wool seat covers after just a day in the saddle and I could have sold a set of touring pegs to every bloke.

The five star accommodations comprised a one man tent, air bed and a sleeping bag, all inclusive in the cost of the run. Each morning, after brekkie, we loaded our crew bags on the gear truck and lined up to pack our lunch box and fill our water bottles.

For some, the first few days were a matter of coming to grips with their newly acquired postie bike, while taking in some of the steep, windy, rain forestry scenery. Others struggled, not to become part of the scenery. Not one to sit at the rear, I soon learned the only way to get any advantage was to find a light weight rider and wind slick him.

Over the next few days, the roads flattened and provided some interesting 90 degree corners and "T" junctions for us to "practise" passing manoeuvres under brakes. Beyond Charleville, playing with the road trains, most pulling 3 and 4 trailers, on

single lane haulage roads, provided some adrenalin rush. One confused truckie was heard to ask another, “*Hey mate what would a postie be doing way out here???* Hang on there’s another one...” an on coming truckie butted in, “*Get ready there’s heaps of the buggers coming at ya*”.

Leaving Windorah most people were excited, the dirt was about to start. By the time we reached Birdsville, some people were asking themselves, “what on earth am I doing here?” A few drinks in the famous Birdsville pub eased the pain. A visit to Big Red, the largest sand dune at the start of the Simpson Desert, was too much for any of us to ride up, so we all walked to the top, carrying one bike up for a photo shoot and enjoyed the spectacular view. By this time, friendships were being formed and nick names, like Frosty, Dirt Demon and Comb Over were being used.

## **51 POSTIES AT THE BIRDSVILLE PUB**



Heading north from Birdsville the roads were good, half dirt and half black top, until the last stretch into Boulia, when the real gravel started (heaps of flat tyres and a few stacks) For some 6 riders, wisdom prevailed at this point and they put their bikes on the mechanics vehicles and bussed it to Alice, where they met up with the rest of us.

After travelling some 450 k (Tobermorey Station to Gemtree) of full on bull dust, sand, pot holes, rocks and enormous corrugations, some of us started wondering if the ones in the coach weren’t the clever ones. Apparently, the Plenty highway had deteriorated badly since the course survey !! For the seasoned dirt riders, it provided some exciting riding, but other more hesitant riders were moving so slow that they were taken off their bikes at dusk and given a ride in the air con. Four of our numbered scored a flight with the flying doctor to nearby hospitals, attesting to the difficult conditions.

Well done to the organisers, they had every rider in to the BBQ tea and bon fire on time. All bikes were retrieved from the road side, checked over and ready to go by

morning. By this time, most riders had fallen off at least once (CD player hit a record 12 stacks that day).

Our final day was a steady ride onto the Stuart Highway and into Alice Springs for the final dinner and presentations. The local Rotary club who benefited from the donation of most of the 52 motorbikes, to auction for charity, looked after us extremely well.

One of the highlights of our trip was participating in the grand parade of the Henley on Todd Regatta and as official guests at the Rotary marque, in the river bed, we had some of the best seats in the house to watch the regatta from.

I didn't talk to one person who was not excited and very glad they had done the trip although some did say they would **probably** not do it again. I thoroughly enjoyed it and have already applied to the family treasury department for funds to go again next year!

**Ron Thomson.**

PS. Guess who made the entire trip upright, only to stack it in the Alice Springs Mall, during the grand parade!!

## **PHOTO SHOOT AT BIG RED**

