

## Tassie Tour 2024

The Tassie tour is organised every two years by the British Motorcycle Club of Tasmania. Bookings open about six months ahead and fill up to capacity within hours.. Only 100 entries are accepted for bikes up to 1970. Some guest are invited from the UK and some other countries. These are Vincent and Brough Superior riders who get a loan bike out of the collection of Peter Bender to ride in the tour. Peter Bender requires these riders to wear a “Safety Vest” which blows up automatically when a rider gets thrown off the bike. In 2022 a rider on the tour lost his life when he crashed on one of the mountain sections failing to negotiate a bend. When leaning into a corner his stand scraped the road eventually pushing him to the wrong side of the road into a tree. Wearing one of these safety vest could have saved his life.



The rally had 8 Brough Superior and 12 Vincent riders. An amazing number considering the scarcity and value of these bikes..

My wife and I drove my van with bike from Sydney to the ferry in Geelong .And we took the overnight ferry to Devonport on the

Friday. The Tour is quite a commitment if you include the cost of the ferry and the overnight accommodation . And also in time, as you will be at least two weeks away. The entry cost of the tour is a very reasonable \$400.

The British Motorcycle Club has a team of about 10 people who run the tour. It is all very well done with a professionally printed tour book covering every day's route with map and description . Some lunches and a number of dinners are optional at subsidized cost. Those who travel alone can have their bag picked up from the motel and delivered at the next stop.

When a ride leaves from a town then the first few corners are marshalled to guide you outside of town.. The rest of the route will be sign posted . A back up will pick up any breakdowns and collect the signs.

The rally started with a welcome dinner at the Ulverstone Life saving club. A great opportunity to meet up with other riders. A group of 10 riders from West Australia had made the effort to cross the country to be on the tour. What an effort. Some went on to ride also at the Bathurst Tour week. There were riders from every other state .

## The Route

Most overnight stops were 2 or 3 days. But every day was a riding day (if you wished) Riding distances were 200-300 km per day. Quite a long day on mostly winding roads. The road surface was generally very good. Much better than in NSW.

I did not ride on



a few “transfer” days between hotels, as my wife was not keen driving the van on the mostly narrow and winding roads. But the roads are motorcycle heaven and must be among the best in the world to ride on a motorcycle. As I said before the road surface was good and the traffic light.

Tasmania has been discovered by the motorcycle crowd as hundreds of (modern) bikes tour the state.

Surprisingly in the North, riding on day trips up some valleys were among the best trips. The roads follow the valleys of the rivers running from the high country in the centre of Tasmania towards the coast. Towns like Ulverstone and Devenport are build in the estuaries of the rivers.

The tempo of riding is quite quick. To keep up with the pack it requires a bike capable of riding at 90-100 km p/h . I estimate that the total riding distance was around 2000km. Because of this I afforded myself a soft tail bike. I recommissioned my 1953 BMW R51/3 which I had not used in 15 years. It performed faultless and runs first kick. Most bikes participating were mid 1960's British. Plenty of Triumph , BSA and Norton. A good number of pre-war machines .including the Brough's. Riders mostly in their 60's with the youngest just under 30. I was the second oldest rider. One rider who had lost his left arm at age 13 rode a 1960's Triumph . Asking him about how he keeps the handle bars from shaking on bad roads, he said to let the bike do the work. It sort's itself out and only hold on lightly. A very brave man.

Previous tour (2022) one (American) rider on one of Peter Bender's Vincent's ,sadly lost his life. The coroners report says that his speed was under 60km/ph. But on a sharp corner on a mountain stretch his foot peg hit the roads sending him across the other lane into a ditch. A very creepy experience which happened to me aswell..Not that I ended in the wrong lane . My center stand step scraped the road whilst leaning heavily left hand bend . It lifted the rear wheel . The bike then moved away from me. I could quickly correct and escape a problem. This had happened before on another german bike. My Zundapp did the same on one of the Bathurst runs a few years ago. I think that these older german bikes are low and the centerstand has a fairly long step. So in a sharp bend leaning over they hit the road .

From Ulvertone it was of to Strahan on the west coast. Strahan has the most rain in Tassie. For once it did not rain there. The run that day out of Strahan was to the Reece dam then on to Queenstown

and back to Strahan. The stretch from the dam to Queenstown was one of the best of the tour. Very quiet , great scenery and new surface. I think that these roads are paid for by the hydro companies running the dams. On the way to the dam I followed a small group but at the dam they seemed to have gone back. I saw Gary Lowe from Newcastle come through on his Manx Norton. I waited 10 minutes at the dam to see if any others riders came through. No-one. So I asked one of the hydro workers if that was the correct way to Queenstown. They confirmed it was correct. So I took off on my own on a very quiet road.(no traffic) After half an hour one starts hearing funny noises coming from the bike and start worrying about a breakdown. Fortunately all was ok and after about an hour I reached the main road to Queenstown. Having a coffee there a few others also came through.

That night we had a BBQ dinner on the Strahan beach . Salmon donated by Huon Salmon (Peter Bender). Absolutely delicious. And the weather was again perfect.

From Strahan the next stop was Hobart. A long way (300km) but there is nowhere to stay overnight with a group of 150 people !

There were a few days riding around Hobart. One of the days we had a luncheon at Peter Bender's place where we could view his collection and workshop. His mechanic also did a roaring demonstration run up the long driveway on the record Egli Vincent. Another BBQ luncheon was enjoyed with more salmon.

The next overnight from Hobart was Port Arthur. The penal colony were many were punished to work a life long for the government. I recommend the night ghost tour when it is quiet . You get an understanding of how life would have played out 225 years ago.



Then along the coast to Bicheno and the next day

to Launceston. For a good stretch you ride along the ocean which is very pretty , particularly when enjoying the good weather.



Launceston is a decent size town usually enjoying warmer weather than the rest of Tasmania. The day around the central highlands is another fine run of about 200km.

The last day of riding brought us back to Devonport with the farewell dinner at the local sportsclub. A simple meal but tasty meal was enjoyed by all. The next day we enjoyed watching the world Triathlon games which were held there for the 30th time. Amazing athletes who were trying to qualify for the Olympics later this year.

This was the eighth tour which is run every two years. Many of the participants had come for the second, third etc time. Would I do it again? Probably not. It is a big commitment financially as well as time wise. We are fortunate to be able to choose from so many events in Australia.

We left Tasmania that night on the ferry. It was an amazing two weeks of full on activities. Thank you Tassie Tour organising committee.

Hans Spranger