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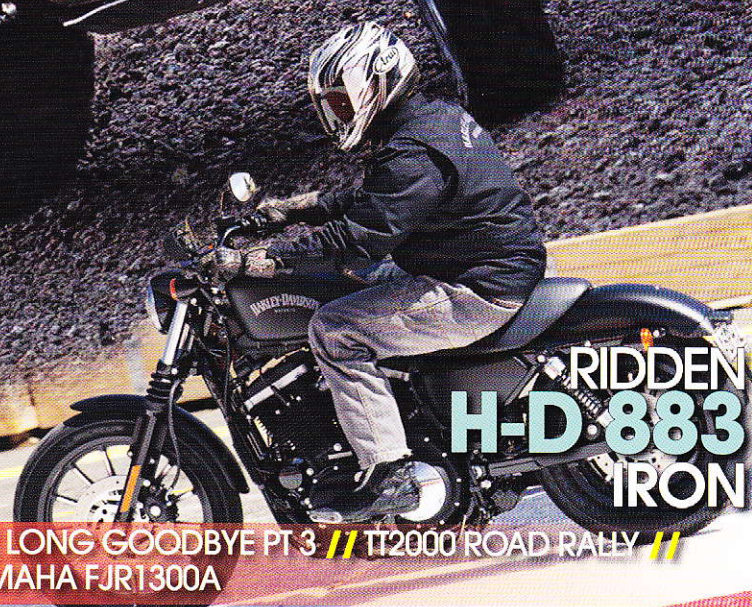
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Reckon you can cover 2000kms in 48 hours? Each year plenty of people enter the TT2000 road rally to try and do just that.

WORDS & PICS: Racing Dave



Lest we forget

Lest we forget. These three simple words which have such deep meaning were the theme for the fifth annual TT2000 long-distance road rally, organised by Mike (Twisting Throttle) Hyde over the February 23-24 weekend. Starting and finishing at Hampton Motorcycles in Christchurch, the endurance event started at 6 pm on Friday and finished at 6 pm on Sunday. An extra window of four hours until 10 pm Sunday, as a means of discouraging the perceived likelihood of riders having to speed to finish on time, was agreed after consultation with the local police.

CHECK MATE

Lest we forget. Seventy-one checkpoints, with various points' values ranging from 100 to 5000, were scattered mainly east of the South Island's Alps, and of these, 57 were war memorials of some sort, being halls, gateways, or the typical plinths commonly seen in small towns.

Most had plaques attached on which were engraved the names of those killed in battle, and riders took the



Heading to the Mt John observatory in the Mackenzie Country (top) and one of the many local War Memorials, this time at Murchison between Westport and Nelson.

time to respectfully acknowledge the fallen soldiers while taking the photos that proved that a checkpoint had been visited.

There was no need to attempt all 71 – to qualify as a finisher riders merely had to amass at least 10,000 points and cover 2000km, with the order and number of checkpoints being entirely of the rider's choice. Ninety entrants, with an eclectic mix of bikes (I was riding my BMW R 1200 GS Adventure), passed scrutineering and gathered in the hot afternoon sun yarning with their mates while keeping an eye on the time.

CAREFUL PLANNING

The key to a successful TT2000 is to carefully manage fatigue, nutrition, and hydration and I enjoyed planning this aspect of the ride as well as choosing the most efficient route. All checkpoints were accessible by sealed roads, but on an adventure bike there were opportunities to shorten the distance between successive stops by taking to the gravel. This was particularly useful in South Canterbury and Otago, and significant distance, and crucially

time, was saved in this manner. In addition, gravel roads are good fun, and very lightly trafficked.

TICKING THEM OFF
Mead, Milford, Otipua, Mt Horrible...

My plan was to attempt all the checkpoints, so I was smartly away, heading south on SH1, as soon as the departure signal was given. There's nothing like a Le Mans start to set the tone! With more checkpoints in the bottom half of the South Island than the upper, I figured that I'd get the first 13 on the Friday, overnighting at Waimate, and the remainder through Saturday, with my second stop at home, which left the northern loop for Sunday.

At the time, it seemed possible that all could be reached without

the need for any risky fast riding or shortage of sleep.

...Hook, Mt Dasher, Incholme, Kakanui...

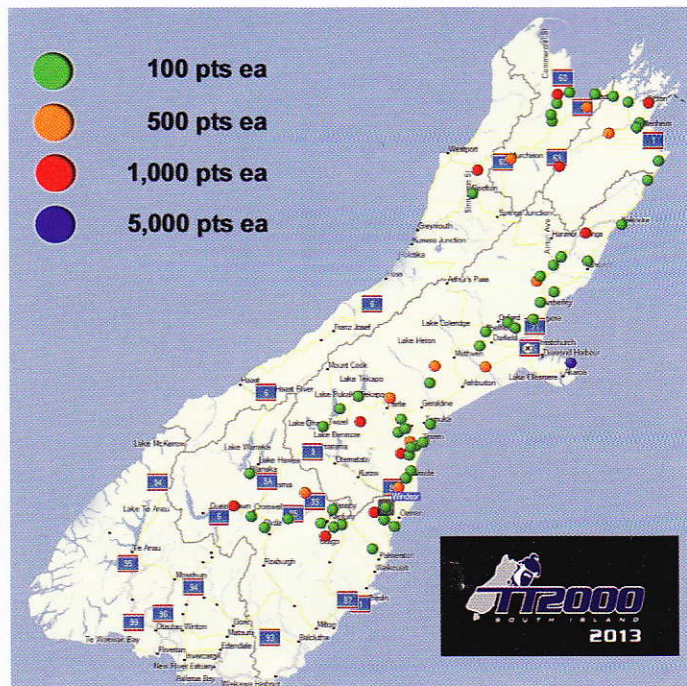
Despite the relatively busy main roads, the riding was enjoyable, as it was a warm evening and remained so even after dark. The checkpoints were easy to find and photograph and the occasional interaction with other TT riders kept up the spirit of the event.

A combination of rolling route sheet and my Strike Genius GPS led me unflinching to the sequence I'd chosen, and thus I arrived after 340km in Waimate at 10:30pm, well satisfied with progress.

PLENTY OF LIVESTOCK

...Waipiata, Patearoa, Gimmerburn, Ophir...

Out of bed at 4:30am and on the



This year's TT2000 route menu (top) and top scorer Michael Green aboard his ST1100 Honda leaving the Naseby checkpoint. Left: Racing Dave ready to go and, oh dear, wasting valuable time with unnecessary paper-work in the Wairau Valley on Sunday.

road by 5:00, there was a lot of zigging and zagging to do, as even though the checkpoints were reasonably close together (over the whole course they averaged half an hour between stops), the navigation was complex to join them up, and the first of the gravel roads was used to maintain pace. Plenty of livestock to avoid, too, and I crossed paths with sheep, cows, wallabies, possums, hedgehogs, rabbits, and hares.

...Blue Cliffs, Ohau, Ashwick Flat, Hazelburn...

I reached Clyde by late morning, and soon after on the Crown Range met Ryan (BMW K 1200 S), who I'd arranged to accompany. We caught up to a Highway Patrol car on the Crown's zigzag, and to our joy, he pulled over and waved us through. That's what I call

positive policing!

NORTH NOW

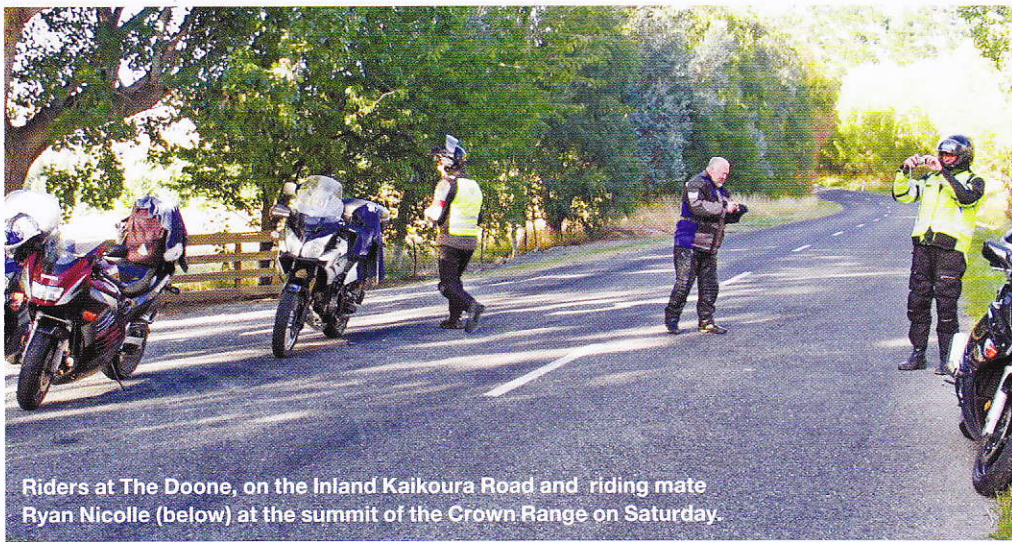
...Bennetts, Broomfield, The Doone, Kekerengu...

We rode together, picking up all the inland northbound checkpoints, until Hororata, where I carried on with my get-them-all plan and Ryan, who was chasing fewer than me, went home for a sleep. The most valuable checkpoint, the 5000-pointer at Stony Beach on Banks Peninsula, was my final target for the day, and I reached home at 12:30am for a short sleep.

... Rapaura, Marsden Valley, Dovedale, Kohatu...

On the road again at 5:30am, Ryan and I headed north up SH1, taking photos as we went, before cutting out the misty Leader Valley and bathed-in-sunshine Inland Kaikoura Road





Riders at The Doone, on the Inland Kaikoura Road and riding mate Ryan Nicolle (below) at the summit of the Crown Range on Saturday.

in fine style.

By Blenheim the day was really heating up, as was, to my disappointment, the Highway Patrol presence in the Wairau Valley. Apparently, demerit points don't add to the TT total!

HOMeward-BOUND

...Omihi, Rotherham, Misty Hills, Medbury...

By the time we arrived in Nelson, time was fleeting, and so we pressed on, and had a terrific ride down the Motueka Valley road, one of the rally's

best. By Rainbow Ski Field, it was clear that getting to the finish before 10pm needed to be a priority, so we made our last checkpoint in Murchison, and with three hours and nearly 300km remaining, headed east for Christchurch.

...Wakapuata, Sutherlands, Ngatimoti, Tapawera...

The next 200km before dark flew by, and with the setting sun behind us lighting the bush over Lewis Pass a golden green, and with barely a car on the road, we were both

constantly doing the maths to see if we'd make it back in time. Even the three red traffic lights in a row on Russley Road didn't matter, and we rolled quietly into Hampton's forecourt at 9:57pm. Success!

BRAGGING RIGHTS

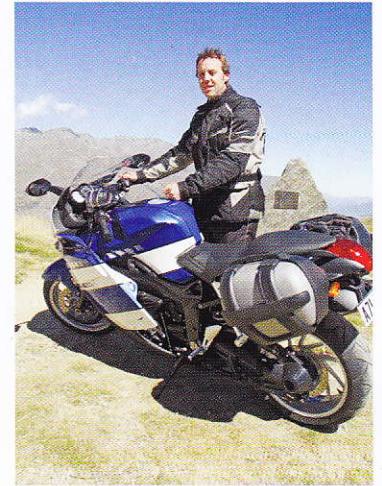
The ride totaled 171,000 trouble-free km, and bragging rights go jointly to Ian Johnston (V-Strom 650) and Michael Green (ST1100) who achieved the maximum 25,000 points. If there had been one up

for grabs, I would have received the Bronz medal having covered 2,900km collecting my 65 checkpoints worth 23,100 points. My average riding speed was 90km/h, but taking into account photo stops it drops to 73km/h, and over the entire 52-hour ride duration it was 56km/h. Fuel consumption averaged 5.5 litres/100km.

About half the riders rode little more than the minimum required to be classified as a finisher.

Mike Hyde has told me that planning for the February 2014 TT2000 has already commenced and that a new format will again be tried.

Needless to say, I'll be there! ■





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