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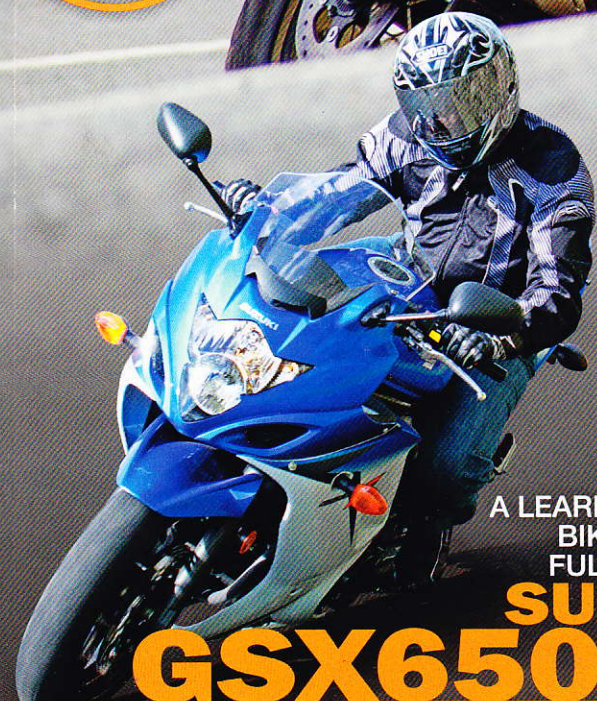
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A LEARNER-LEGAL
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NIGHT
ROD

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EVENTS TT2000 | SOUTHERN CROSS | BOULEVARD RALLY | SOUTHERN SCENIC ROUTE

THE LONG WAY HOME

TT2000

Words and photos Peter Ryan



This was the fifth year running for the TT2000 and once again a healthy sum of 83 riders lined up to collect a t-shirt and head off for a serious weekend's riding on some of the best roads the South Island can offer.

Mike Hyde's organised rides are the best there is on offer and are as tough or as easy as you want them to be. This year we were to photograph most of the War Memorials in the South Island. I have never taken much notice of War Memorials before but having seen my fair share of them now I'm quite impressed and they are all well maintained.

For some it was a new experience just to see if they could do it and for many it was the challenge to complete yet again another TT. It's not a ride for everyone but for many it's the best and most organised ride there is. As usual the riders came from most parts of the country with a big selection of makes and models. The line-up on Friday afternoon was well worth the look and there were well wishers and spectators with the usual keen riders eyeing up the hardware and enjoying the sun. The weather forecast was absolutely ideal.

Every ride has been different and a serious challenge has been offered for the hard-assed of the country. This year the TT was scaled back slightly due to the input from the safety police but a serious challenge none the less.

IT'S A CHALLENGE – NOT A RACE

The TT2000 is not, as some would suggest, an all-out blast around a couple of turn points, but is a long challenging ride to find and gather up points spread around the top and centre of the Island. The rules are all there in plenty of time on the TT website and every rider sets a course to suit themselves. To complete and receive the coveted badge there was a minimum ride of 2,000km and 10,000 points to be gathered up.

With a total of 171,000km run there are many stories to be told and I've yet to hear most of them. I would still like to know what the Southland crew were doing on Coronet Peak and why they have been



banned from the luge. Queenstown wasn't even a turn point. There was a fair emphasis on enjoyment for some riders. Yes, it was a good weekend.

For me the ride started up in Bike Rider Magazine territory. I only started prepping for the ride a couple of weeks before heading off so it was a bit of a rush to get a sports bike ready with GPS installed and a rack on the back for my trusty tent and a change of socks. On the Wednesday it was time to drop tools and head off for the boat in Wellington. There were a number of riders gathering and all heading for the start line at Christchurch. Past experience has taught me to wear warm gear at this time of year but it was seriously hot riding during the day. More riders on the Kaikoura coast then I turned inland to start checking out my new Garmin Zumo and some of the check points. By Thursday evening I was in Christchurch for a good night's sleep.



Views this big!



Friday for me is time to check camera batteries and top up on food ready for the big run, but I did manage to join many others for the bike shop tour. It was time to kick some tyres and sit on some sensible cruising bikes. Later in the day the bikes gathered at Hampton Motorcycles. Kick-off was at 6pm so the afternoon was time to relax and check out the bikes on the ride.

The bikes and their riders were checked out as per the safety police and then the briefing by Mike. At 6pm the t-shirts were handed out and it was time to hit the road.

HARE AND THE TORTOISE

My biggest concern this year was fuel mileage, I had 240km max so this was going to be a daylight run. Along with a large group of others I headed for the other side of Akaroa to pick up some easy points before motoring up to Kaikoura for the night. A good start for the weekend I thought. Half way back from the Stony beach turn point my fuel light came on and it was a long way to Christchurch. There were fuel pumps but they were all closed after 5pm. My only option was to slow down and conserve fuel. I did make it to the pump at Halswell but not before running out of gas twice. In desperation I shook the bike sideways and it started up again. It finally ran out within sight of the pumps and I pushed it across the road. So much for the speed advantage of an R1, this ride was going to be a challenge.

With some luck and serious planning I made it to Kaikoura for the night, then up before dawn on

Saturday morning and off to the gas station. The sun came up on that great piece of road up the coast but my tyres were still cold. A quick photo at Picton for 1,000 points and we were off again down the Wairau Valley. I had three high points photos to pick up on the way to Reefton then a long stretch south through the Arthurs Pass to Tekapo, Wanaka and down through the Cardrona Valley to turn east and pick up my final points at Bannockburn for a well deserved pint and some wedges. It was a great ride for the day but the Bannockburn pub was a bit of a disappointment, it was all new after being burned down and rebuilt all modern. Not quite what I remember so headed down to Cromwell for a good sleep in my tent.

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAIL...

I just wasn't taking this ride seriously enough and made a late start in the morning. Maybe it was a good thing as the bike felt bad with the best of the tyres gone and the roads cold and foggy all the way to Wedderburn. It was there that I realised I had missed my turn point to Ophir and forgotten to stop for a photo at Clyde. The fog was playing games with me and I was in the wrong valley. Damn it, so I stopped and took a classic photo of the bike parked outside the Wedderburn railway station. No points for the photo but a classic none the less. The next photo points were a group south of Naseby and I wasn't going to miss them so it was off to Gimmerburn. After Gimmerburn it was south to Patearoa, but back



at the intersection to go south I couldn't get back onto the road because of the bumper to bumper traffic which was on the horizon in both directions. I sat at the intersection stunned at the traffic. It was too early in the morning for a funeral procession and didn't really look like one, no lights on. I was passing what seemed like hundreds of cars till they all turned left and the road was empty again... strange. After Patearoa it was straight back north again then down the same road as all the cars had taken. Rounding the last corner to get the photo I was confronted with a wall of people and cars. After a bit of rewing and weaving I stopped at the photo point which was hidden behind an ambulance. Ignoring all of this I squeezed a photo of the required war memorial then hopped back on the bike. The ambulance driver waved me through the people but my curiosity got the better of me and I asked him what on earth was going on. This was the annual Rail Trail Race and the cars were camp followers racing round to the next road crossover to follow the action. Ah, it all made sense now.

I won't go into detail about the next shortcut through a gravel section. It wasn't too long but on the R1 it was definitely the bit to leave out next time. A Postie scooter would have beaten me through there.

After hitting the main road through to Oamaru it was a bit boring really except that the road to the coast is awesome, fast and twisty and the sun was well up and hot by now. After a few more photo stops it was north to Timaru for a late barbecue lunch with friends. I had planned to nip over to Levels raceway for a look but the lunch went on for a bit long and as my wife was waiting impatiently in Christchurch I thought better of it.

The home run consisted of two more point stops and a lot of long flat roads. I look forward to starting these rides and after almost 2,400km it was nice to roll into Hampton Motorcycles, finished and feeling good. Riders had been rolling in since 6pm and there were more to come.

Once again the ride was a huge success with all but a few riders making it back to the finish in time. For that we get a small badge, some fridge magnets and a couple of TT2000 stickers for the bike. We also get to keep the by now dirty t-shirt which was draped over the bike in all the photos to prove we rode the course. Next time I'll spend less time visiting friends and maybe try a bike with better fuel mileage. All up I rode 4,300km, used God knows how much fuel and a set of tyres. It's a tough ride but someone has to do it.

TTT



The sound of gently snoring surf

